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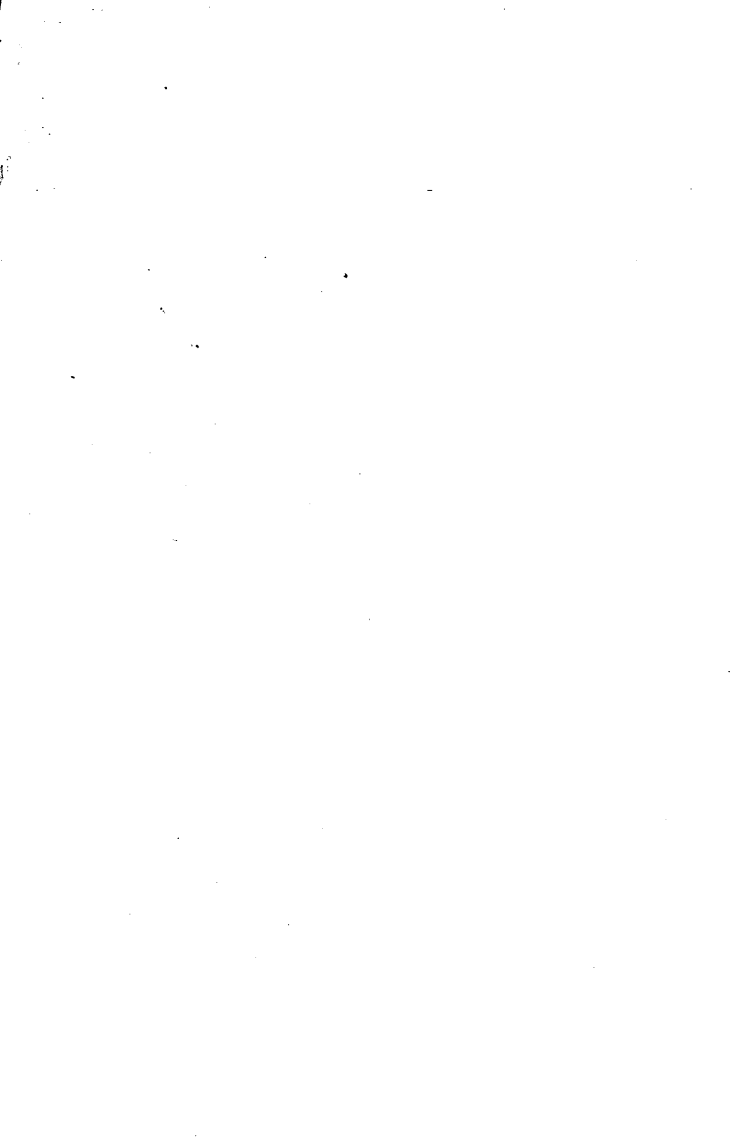
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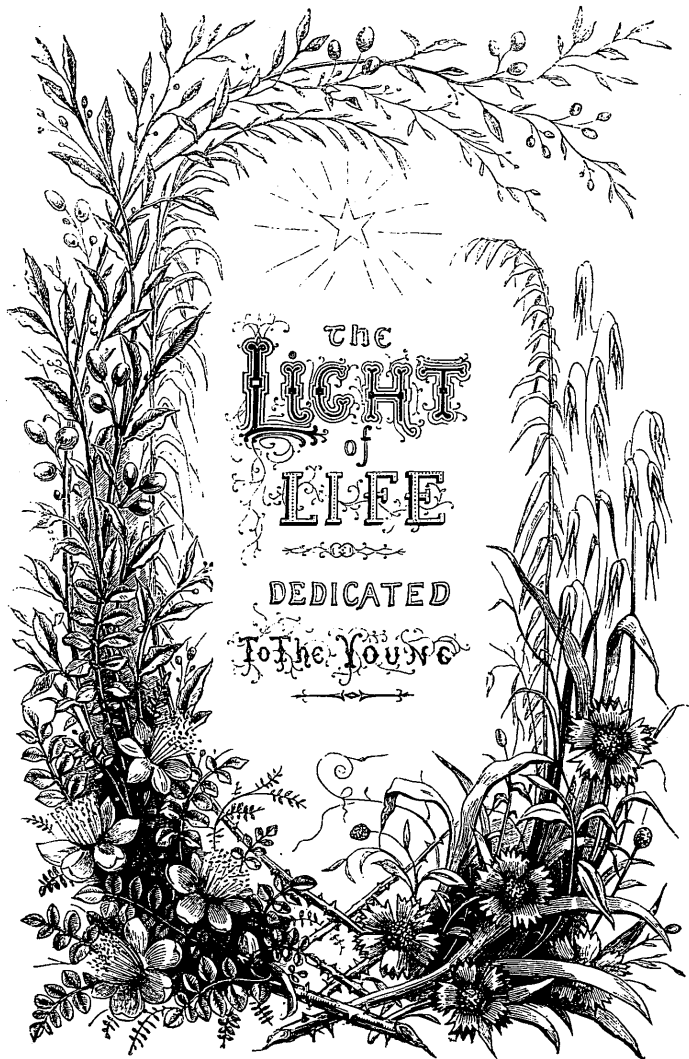
C. J. SINGER





"Thou art the Life, O Lord !
Sole Light of Life Thou art !
Let not Thy glorious rays be pour'd
In vain on my dark heart.
Star of the East, arise !
Drive all my clouds away,
Guide me till earth's dim twilight dies
Into the perfect day !"

Lyra Germanica.



THE
LIGHT
of
LIFE

DEDICATED
To The Young



The Light of Life.

DEDICATED TO THE YOUNG.

BY

MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF

"MINISTERING CHILDREN," "ENGLAND'S YEOMEN,"

ETC. ETC.

Fourth Thousand.

SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, FLEET STREET.
LONDON. MDCCCLXI.

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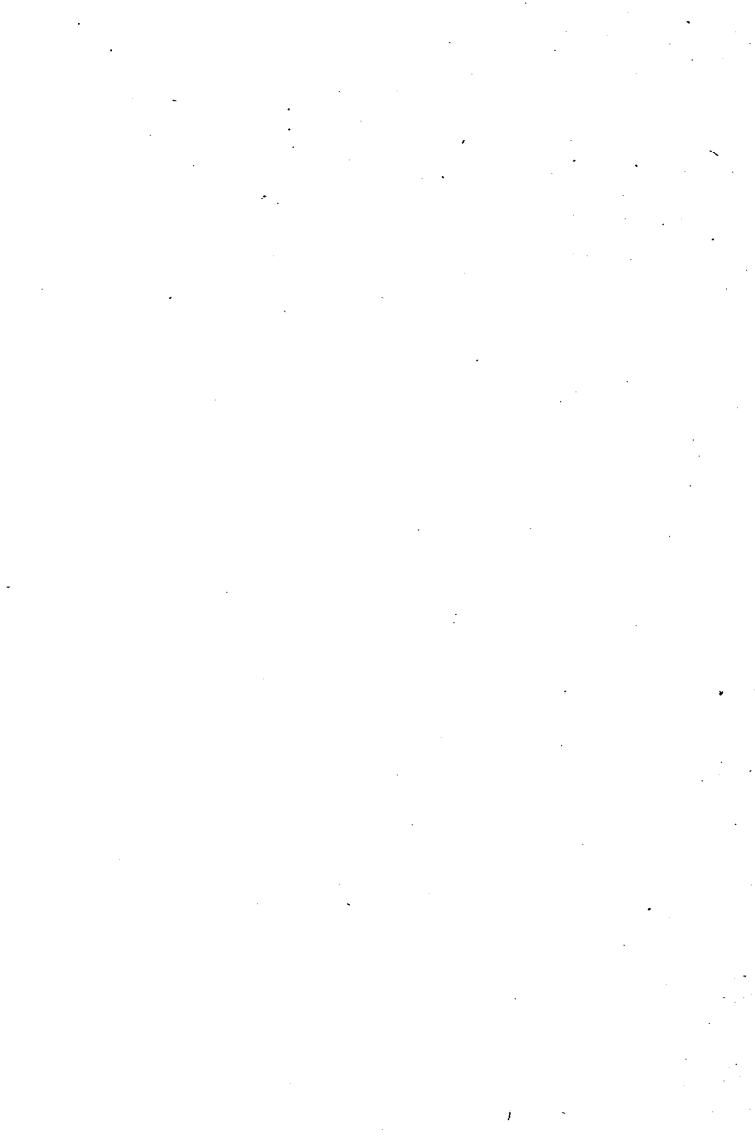
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THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS little volume is written for your use at the period in which you take leave of the years of childhood, and enter upon a more responsible position. Hitherto you have been governed by the authority of others. In most things, if not in all, a choice has been made for you. If you erred from that which was considered right, there were those around you who felt it to be their duty to reprove and instruct you. Happy will it be for you if the blessings of reproof and instruction are continued to you ; the more highly you value them, and the more kindly you welcome them, the purer and the brighter will your course in life become.¹ But for the future your occupations will probably be much more under the regulation of your own choice. Your habits of thought, and your tone of feeling and expression,

¹ Prov. ix. 9 ; xv. 31-33.

will be daily forming themselves, and moulding your character. You are growing up in an evil world;¹ and no home, however sheltered, no tender care of others, no earthly safeguard, can preserve you from its influences.² There is but one security, and that security we learn from the recorded supplication of our Lord to His Heavenly Father—"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."³ Your safety lies in God alone. You will be influenced for good or evil, and the good will be real and abiding, according as God is regarded or disregarded by you in all things. And the continual unconscious or conscious influence which you must exercise over others, will be good or evil, according to the conformity or nonconformity of your character with the only standard of right—the mind and will of God. Oh, then, as you enter life, pause and look upward to Him who is willing to receive you as the child of His adoption; willing to send down into your heart the Spirit of His Son;⁴ and to confirm to you all that applies to your need of the promise made to Him—"I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee."⁵ He knows your danger; He also knows that in His keeping no evil thing can reach you; therefore in great love to your soul He meets you at this the starting-point of life, and asks of you

¹ 1 John, v. 19.² Ps. cxlvi. 3-5.³ John, xvii. 15.⁴ Gal. iv. 5, 6.⁵ Isa. xlii. 6.

this question, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth?"¹ Every hour of your youth will be rendering back the answer to that inquiry.

You cannot read your future path, nor anticipate the events and changes which time will bring for you. Those who are far in life before you may look back upon their own pathway through it, but they cannot trace a single future step of yours with any certainty. No created eye can look upon it. It is a path prepared for *you*, a path which none beside have trod. He knows it, who knows the end from the beginning: He knows its every danger, and its every blessing, and He alone can enable you to avoid the one and to secure the other. Great will be your happiness if you do not venture on a single step alone, but yield yourself in all things to His safe and blessed guidance.²

Those who have advanced in life before you cannot determine the circumstances that await you; but they can estimate in some degree the variety of influences that will surround you, for these are common to all. You will be brought into continual intercourse with others, and you will be continually receiving new impressions. You will witness the actions, hear the words, and observe the tone of feeling of all whom you meet. A great variety, and sometimes, it may be, a puzzling contradiction, will

¹ Jer. iii. 4.

² Ps. v. 8. Jer. x. 23.

be presented to your mind. If good and evil were unmixed on earth, you would have no difficulty in forming a judgment; and the day is coming when they will be for ever separated: but until then you may meet with much natural loveliness of character in those whose hearts are estranged from the will of God, and devoted to the things of this world. At the same time you may sometimes be constrained to mark a sad contrast between the spirit and life of professing Christians, and the Will of Him whose Name they bear. If you have no clue to lead you through this labyrinth, no certain points by which to guide your course, that fatal step may be the result with you, as it has been with many—the turning from entire subjection to the revealed will of God, as the rule of life, because of the inconsistencies of those who profess to obey it; and the following the course of this world, as a path in which much earthly excellence is found, and therefore likely to prove right at the last. The clue is given you in the Word of God; the certain points in His revealed Truth: but even if persuaded of the reality of things unseen, you seek them in the appointed way, and seeking find: still, if you suffer your eye to rest upon the inconsistencies which the world around you will present, the distinct and quickly sensitive perception of Heavenly Truth which the Holy Spirit's light imparts will be worn away. Your eye and ear growing familiar with the breach of the Heavenly

Law may become less conscious of that breach, and its broken lines may be reflected in all your character. But if you endeavour to keep the perfect standard revealed in the written Word ever before you, and to make it your rule in all things, then will it be reflected by you in ever-increasing consistency. Beholding as in a glass the Glory of the Lord, you will be changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.¹

In looking upon those who profess to follow Christ, while you remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "The tree is known by its fruit;"² and while you fear to call evil good, as much as to call good evil;³ you have need continually to keep in mind that wherever you expect much, your eye will be quicker in detecting any failing. You must also remember that you may be witness to the transgression, and not to the grief that follows that transgression. Those who witnessed Peter's sin did not see His tears; but He who forgiveth all the iniquities of His repenting servants looked upon them, and after His resurrection sent to Peter a message of assurance by name.⁴ The faults of a character may in some cases be very apparent, when yet its secret spring may be right; and many things may be daily resulting from that secret spring unknown to you, but marked by God, and acceptable

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

² Matt. xii. 33.

³ Isa. v. 20.

⁴ Mark, xvi. 7.

to Him, because the fruit of faith in Christ. If there be in any a grievous weakness in faith and obedience, in whom, notwithstanding, the main spring is right, if you, because of this, justify yourself in any departure from the revealed Will of God, your attainment will fall lower still, and most probably will prove in the end to have been altogether short of saving faith, for faith of necessity results in *the will to obey*. You will also confirm in others their low standard, instead of elevating it, as you might have been permitted to do had your heart been true in its allegiance to God. If you examine yourself, you will never fail to find occasion to take the lowest place; and this will lead to the only right feeling with which censure can ever be passed, by those who are themselves sinful; even a sense of your own transgressions and proneness to err, with an earnest desire that the will of God should be perfected in yourself, and in others. You need be at no loss to discover those who adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. You may meet with such who are still Pilgrims here, and you may read of such who have passed away from earth. Blessed will you be if your effort is to follow them, as they have followed Christ.

Your life will reflect the object you keep in view. If your object be earthly—your life cannot rise

above it. But if your eye is fixed on Jesus, you will soon begin to bear His image: while the ever-present sense of forgiveness, which His presence imparts, will strengthen you, above all things, in the endeavour to follow Him. Looking unto Jesus, your course must be upward—drawing nearer to Him on whom to look is to approach; until by His grace you finish it with joy, and receive the crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to all who love His appearing.¹

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

CHAPTER I.

"IN HIM WAS LIFE; AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN."—John, i. 4.

WHEN Adam walked in innocence, he walked in the Light of the Lord, the Light of Life: but when he turned away from God, the darkness of Sin and the sentence of Death came upon him. Death had been set before him as the wages of Sin;¹ but he chose the path of disobedience: therefore Sin, and Death by Sin, must have been man's eternal portion, if the Son of God had not come to his rescue, giving Himself as the sinner's ransom, the sinner's surety—"Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom."² "As for Thee, by the blood of Thy Covenant, I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."³ Oh how quickly did the Heavenly Daysman step between, and lay His hand upon both, even upon the sinner and the sinner's God, making peace by the blood of His Cross! In Him was Life, and His Life became the Light of men. From the day when Adam, under the guilt of Sin and the sentence of Death, heard

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

² Job, xxxiii. 24.

³ Zech. ix. 11.

the promise of One who should subdue the foe before whom he had fallen,¹ from that day to this, one line of separation has divided the whole human race. Those who walk on still in darkness; and those who in Jesus Christ have found again the Light of Life. Those who walk in Darkness under sentence of Death, and those who walk in the Light of Life, are often intermingled in human societies, they dwell together in one city and one family; but the day will come when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; then shall they be for ever separated; and the great gulf,² which divides the Light and Life of Heaven from the Darkness and eternal Death of Hell, must lie between them for ever. In every page of the sacred history—from righteous Abel, who offered up in faith the firstling of his flock, to Paul the aged, waiting for the crown of Life, which, he said, the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to him, and to all who loved that Lord's appearing—we see the Light of Life shining into the hearts of all who looked for salvation to Him—The Child who opened the doors of the house of the Lord;³ the shepherd in his solitary tent, keeping watch over his few sheep in the wilderness;⁴ the Monarch on his throne;⁵ the Slave in his Master's house;⁶ and the Captive in his dungeon,⁷

¹ Gen. iii. 15.² Luke, xvi. 26.³ 1 Sam. iii.⁴ 1 Sam. xvii. 28, 34-37.⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 23-26.⁶ Gen. xxxix. 2-6.⁷ Lam. iii. 53-56.

all looked to Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. The promises, types, and sacrifices, under the Old Testament dispensation, pointed to the Lamb of God who taketh away the Sin of the world. To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins.¹ When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son:²—"I am come a Light into the world, that he that followeth Me should not abide in Darkness."³ "He that hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life."⁴ Sorrow and sighing fled away at the voice of His word; and death was changed to life at His command. Then were heard words, never uttered by human lips before, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."⁵ And though He has ascended up where He was before, He is still seen by all on whom His Light shines. His own word is, "A little while and the world seeth Me no more, *but ye see Me*. He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, *and will manifest Myself unto him*."⁶

We may trace an endless variety in the outward condition, and the natural dispositions, endowments, and acquirements of men; but all alike are born in Sin, and by nature dead to God. By our natural understanding we neither see God, nor know Him.

¹ Acts, x. 43. ² Gal. iv. 4. ³ John, xii. 46. ⁴ 1 John, v. 12.

⁵ Matt. ix. 2. Mark, ii. 5.

⁶ John, xiv. 19-21.

If we saw Him through Christ Jesus, we should desire Him above all things. If we knew Him as He is in Jesus, He would hold the first place in our affections. Out of Christ he is a consuming fire,¹ and truly to see and know Him would only awaken shame and terror, such as Adam felt when he hid himself among the trees of the garden² from the presence of the Lord; such as fallen spirits feel, who believe and tremble.³ But in Jesus all the perfections of God meet their demand to the full, even to an infinite return; therefore God is well-pleased⁴ with all whom He beholds washed in the atoning Blood, clothed in the justifying Righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit of His beloved Son. So terrible is God in His Holiness, that we are told the Heavens are not clean⁵ in His sight, and He chargeth His angels with folly:⁶ but the wayfaring man, though a fool,⁷ if presented to God by Christ, will be found complete in Him, and will be accepted as one of those to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom,⁸ and with it the capacity to receive and enjoy it.⁹ One such, fettered by the limits of his dimmed natural understanding, yet manifesting a love for all Heavenly truth, was questioned about the things per-

¹ Deut. iv. 24.² Gen. iii. 3-10.³ Jam. ii. 19.⁴ Matt. iii. 17.⁵ Job, xv. 15; xxv. 5.⁶ Job, iv. 18.⁷ Isa. xxxv. 8.⁸ Luke, xii. 32.⁹ Isa. xxix. 18, 19; xxxv. 5, 6, 10.

taining to the Kingdom of God; at last it was remarked to him that the way to Heaven was a long way. Is it? he replied: I thought it had been short. Short, do you think it! how do you make that out? He made answer, "It is but THREE STEPS—OUT OF SELF, INTO CHRIST, INTO GLORY!" On every side an observing eye may meet the truth—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."¹ The Son of God declares, "I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly."² And an Apostle says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."³ Those who have the Light of Life now, have it more abundantly. Christ in His infinite fulness is theirs, and His Kingdom in its infinite happiness.⁴ No more as servants, but as sons; and if sons, then heirs of God, through Christ:⁵ therefore another Apostle says, In Jesus ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.⁶

Those in whose hearts God has shined, to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,⁷ are distinguished in the Word of truth as the children of Light;⁸ and all who have not received the Light of this knowledge are spoken of as in Darkness.⁹ No difference is made on account of any earthly distinction; there is no respect

¹ Zech. iv. 6.² John, x. 10.³ Gal. ii. 20.⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 21-23.⁵ Gal. iv. 7.⁶ 1 Pet. i. 8.⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 6.⁸ Eph. v. 8.⁹ Col. i. 12-14.

of persons with God. He poureth contempt upon Princes;¹ and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.² He will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.³ The world by its own wisdom knows not God. Man's fallen spirit can never penetrate the Darkness of Sin, to behold, even for a single moment, the Light of Life. Neither do we by nature seek, or truly desire this knowledge;⁴ for the joy of God's presence can be seen only by its own Light⁵—it must be felt in order to be known, it must be experienced in order to be understood. A void, a want is often within, bearing witness that the only object which can abidingly fill and satisfy is not possessed; but, so long as the mind remains under the Darkness of Sin, the effort is to secure earthly objects, not to regain Heavenly. While God has said, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled: This shall ye have of Mine Hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."⁶ But when the Son of God comes to the soul, He passes through the thick cloud of Sin, for the merit of His atoning blood takes away all its guilt. In the Lord Jesus Christ—the mighty God, the everlasting Father,⁷ again draws near to man, and says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions,

¹ Job, xii. 21.² Isa. xl. 23.³ 1 Cor. i. 19–21.⁴ Rom. iii. 10, 11. ⁵ Ps. xxxvi. 9. ⁶ Isa. L. 11. ⁷ Isa. ix. 6.

and as a cloud, thy sins. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.”¹ He quickens the soul by imparting His own Life-giving Spirit;² by which also He enlightens the eyes of the understanding³ that it may know the hope of His calling. The desire to possess God as our portion is at once awakened by the faintest glimpse of Him, as He is in Jesus Christ — so great is His goodness, and so great is His beauty! The least glance at Sin in the Light of truth, awakens a dread of its nature and its consequences, and an earnest desire to escape its certain condemnation. This Light of Life, in its beginning in the soul, may be as the smoking flax; but He who imparted it will not quench it, until He send forth judgment unto victory.⁴ Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning.⁵

There were certain Greeks at Jerusalem, who said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”⁶ If the same desire arises in our hearts, we need be at no loss as to where we may both seek and find Him. He has made His own appointments — In Prayer — “Call upon Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.”⁷ In His Word — Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of Me.⁸ In the public means

¹ Isa. xlv. 22.² Rom. viii. 2.³ Eph. i. 18.⁴ Matt. xii. 20.⁵ Hos. vi. 3.⁶ John, xii. 20, 21.⁷ Jer. xxxiii. 3.⁸ John, v. 39.

of grace — In all places where I record My Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.¹ Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.² When you have found Him, then you will learn to walk with Him,³ to abide in Him.⁴ Your duties in life may be the same, your pursuits the same, but there will be this difference — earth will not then limit your view in anything; the Light of Life will shine upon your path, and you will live and act in its Light; whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, you will do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.⁵ You will then learn to discern between good and evil, which none can truly do who walk not in the Light of the Lord, and you will be enabled to refuse the evil and to choose the good. All the fruit of your life which grows and ripens under the influence of this Light will remain⁶ — Time cannot wither it; nor Death destroy it — whether it be in words or actions, thoughts or feelings; forgotten by you, all will remain for ever with God, in the Book of remembrance which is written before Him.⁷

It may be that you already know the Lord,

¹ Exod. xx. 24.

² Jer. xxix. 12, 13.

³ Gen. v. 24; vi. 9.

⁴ John, xv. 4. 1 John, ii. 28.

⁵ Col. iii. 17.

⁶ John, xv. 16.

⁷ Mal. iii. 16.

having proved that faithful promise, "Those that seek Me early shall find me;"¹ but perhaps you feel your vision to be dim; more sensible as yet of Darkness than of Light; more conscious of Death than of Life; feeling the weight and fetter of Sin, and not clearly discerning Him who alone is able to take away its guilt and power; believing that in God all blessedness lies, and yet often forgetting and neglecting Him; believing that Heavenly possessions are beyond all price, and yet sometimes so faintly desiring them that the effort to gain them seems to die away. Yet this you know, that however faint the Light may be within you, it did not emanate from your own heart.² Its source and centre are in Jesus Christ.³ Therefore the way is plain for its continual increase, even *looking up to Him from whom it came*.⁴ The more you look upon that Light, the stronger and clearer your view of it will become.⁵ It is, itself, the eye-salve which can alone enable us to see.⁶ Every time you look up in earnest desire to the Lord Jesus;⁷ and every time you look in earnest desire or grateful love to Him in His Word,⁸ His Ordinances,⁹ His Providence,¹⁰ your eye will gather Light, and your Life will gather strength. You may not be always conscious of its increase;

¹ Prov. viii. 17.² 1 Cor. xii. 3.³ 2 Cor. iv. 6.⁴ Isa. xl. 29-31.⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 16-18.⁶ Rev. iii. 18.⁷ Ps. xxxiv. 5. Heb. xii. 1, 2.⁸ Ps. cxix. 105.⁹ Ps. lxxxiv.¹⁰ Ps. cvii. 43.

but that increase will be manifested in stronger desire, a more earnest seeking, and a more continual and greater fear of Sin. There is no duty in life, no lawful employment nor recreation, in which you may not look up to Him, and abide in His Light; finding it your safety, your success, and your happiness so to walk with Him. If your eye be single,¹ endeavouring to look up to God in all; whatsoever you do, seeking to do all to the glory of God;² then will your path shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day.³ Every step in which you are enabled to walk with Him you will gain the strength of increasing knowledge of, and a closer union with Him; until at length your eyes are enlightened to behold Him in all things, and your feet immovable from the way of His commandments.

This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no Darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in Darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth: but if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.⁴ As it is truth that every earnest look directed to Jesus Christ will strengthen your Heavenly vision; and every single step in which you are enabled to walk with Him strengthens your Heavenly Life; it is no

¹ Luke, xi. 34. ² 1 Cor. x. 31. ³ Prov. iv. 18. ⁴ 1 John, i. 5-7.

less true that every sin you wilfully indulge in will darken that vision and weaken that Life.¹ Therefore David learned to hate a vain thought,² for the thought of foolishness is sin;³ and he was purposed that his mouth should not transgress,⁴ for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of in the day of judgment."⁵ In the Psalms you may be ever learning more of the joy and gladness which the Light of God's countenance could impart to a Monarch on his Throne, with wealth, and splendour, and obedient lands around him:⁶ and the bitter grief which its temporary withdrawal, for his sin, occasioned him.⁷ If the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made you free from the Law of Sin and Death,⁸ David's joy in God may be written in your own experience; and the weight of his sorrow never known, if you watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.⁹

¹ Ps. lxvi. 18; cxix. 6. ² Ps. cxix. 113. ³ Prov. xxiv. 9.

⁴ Ps. xvii. 3. ⁵ Matt. xii. 36, 37. ⁶ Ps. iv. 6, 7.

⁷ Ps. xlii. xliii. li. ⁸ Rom. viii. 2. ⁹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

CHAPTER II.

“ I AM THE TRUTH.”—John, xiv. 6.

WE do not wonder that He who is the Light of Life, is also declared to be the Truth. Light is the most perfect emblem of Truth. If Jesus Christ were not the Truth, He could not be the Light of Life to us. He does not say, Peace, peace, to those who come to Him, when there is no peace.¹ He does not heal the hurt of those whom Sin has wounded, slightly. No, Jesus is the Truth; and if we go to Him, He will show us all things as they really are. He will show us our real state, separated from God because of our sin. He will show us the character of God, that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity;² and that we can never bring a clean thing out of an unclean;³ can never say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin.⁴ He will also show us that He has given His life a ransom for our lives; that being God as well as man, His death is an infinite atonement for all who come to Him;

¹ Jer. vi. 14. ² Hab. i. 13. ³ Job, xiv. 4. ⁴ Prov. xx. 9.

that His blood can cleanse us from all sin; His Spirit quicken us to Heavenly Life; His Righteousness be our spotless robe, our garment of salvation; and His Intercession before His Heavenly Father always prevail on our behalf. And He will show us that Eternal Life, in His Father's Kingdom, with His Father's Love, may be ours in Him, and with Him. It must be remembered that we must, each one for ourselves, find this in Christ, and learn it from Him. We may learn it from Books, and we may learn it from Sermons; but if we do not come to Christ, we shall never know, or understand, or receive it in truth. He has learners at His feet of all ages, and all degrees of attainment; all they learn from Him is Truth; and they all make some progress. He never yet sent away one. He encourages the weakest and the most ignorant to come and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart,¹ and will not break the bruised reed.² He can give sight to the blind, and ears to the deaf, and an understanding to the dull. His Truth humbles the proud, makes the foolish wise, heals the broken-hearted, strengthens them that have no might, and comforts the feeble-minded. All who sit at His feet and learn His Truth, in some measure reflect His image; and this resemblance grows stronger, the more they receive of His fulness, grace for grace.³

¹ Matt. xi. 29.² Matt. xii. 20.³ John, i. 16.

The world in which we dwell, with all its hidden secrets and its open beauties, was made by Him; the Heavens are the work of His fingers; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.¹ All the truth of nature is His. All the secrets of wisdom lie open to His eye.² The arrangement and order of the Universe, with every other branch of human knowledge, engages the investigation of those whose natural understandings are deepest and most penetrating: yet if they have not come to God by Jesus Christ, they are still as far off from Him, as if they had never taken a single step in the investigation of His works. But the pride of human knowledge often becomes the most difficult obstacle in the way of their return. The mind that has searched out the works of God, would search out God also, and finds it hard to receive the truth, that the only way of arriving at the knowledge of God is to come to Jesus Christ, confessing sin, confessing ignorance, and asking the cleansing of His atoning blood, and the Divine illumination of His Spirit. Therefore the Apostle says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."³ "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."⁴ The poor are not sur-

¹ John, i. 3. ² Job, xi. 6. ³ 1 Cor. iii. 18. ⁴ 1 Cor. i. 26.

prised when they are told, that they must ask of God to give them the Light of His Holy Spirit : for they feel their ignorance. They are thankful when even a cold unready hand supplies their need, therefore they are not offended when told, that Heaven may be theirs without money and without price, that it is the free gift of God to them, by His Beloved Son, who purchased it for them at the cost of His own life. This truth comes to them in its simplicity, and the Love which bestowed so great a gift, often warms them with its glow, when the world lies cold around them. A rich man rising one morning from a restless night, burdened with anxiety and care, left his mansion before breakfast to try and dispel his gloom by a walk in the fields. On his way he reached a solitary hut, the door of which stood partly open. Looking in, he saw a thin old woman, seated at a little table, on which were a crust of black bread and a mug of water. Her back was turned to the door, and the rich man stopped a moment, unseen by her. She was evidently about to take her morning meal. But before she began, she lifted up her hand, and said twice over, in a tone of thankful wonder, "All this, and Christ beside! All this, and Christ beside!" The rich man learned a lesson at that cottage door, which had more power than all the freshness of nature to enlighten his mind and strengthen his heart. The Lord's own declaration is, "To the

poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”¹

The disciples came to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.² A little child asks for bread, and receives it without a thought of payment: but a man feels he must earn it. A little child believes all that is told him; and it is not until experience has taught him that the words of man are not always truth, that he begins to doubt and learns to disbelieve; but a man argues upon probabilities, and follows his own judgment. A little child fears to lose sight of his guide, and when weary leans on the offered hand; but a man chooses his own way, and walks independently. Therefore it is only of child-like spirits that Christ has said, “Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”³ To many an unlettered peasant, and to many a little child, the source and centre of all Truth has come, and they have known what human understanding never found—Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. While others search His works, labouring to trace out the

¹ Luke, vii. 22, 23.

² Matt. xviii. 1-4.

³ Matt. xix. 14.

secrets of Nature, they have found God Himself. Who would pity those the temporary ignorance of the streams to whom the Fountain is given? Heaven brightens before them, their hearts are there; and though they would adore God in His works, had they the knowledge which some possess, they still would say, It is *best* to behold Him in Himself, our Way, our Guide, to the dwelling-place He is gone to prepare, where we shall be with Him for ever! Pilate asked, What is Truth?¹—asked it of Truth itself, and went away unanswered. How many have asked, and are asking now the same question, with the silent presence of the Truth before them. They ask the question, but their hearts are not willing to sell all that they have, to buy the Pearl of great Price:² and therefore it does not reveal itself to them. The good opinion of others, their own ease, and their own prejudices, must be retained; and therefore it is with them, as it was with Pilate, they ask even of the Truth, and go away unanswered. If you were to put this simple question, What is Truth? to a variety of persons, choosing those most distinguished for human learning, how varied would be their replies, and how unable might you be to receive and embrace that which their reply set before you. While you might find the child whose little fingers sow the corn, following her father's steps along the fresh-

¹ John, xviii. 38.² Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

ploughed land ; or the child within the city's walls, who never saw a corn-field or the sheep within the fold, who could give you the undoubting answer, "Jesus is the Truth !" But though the childlike spirit has not the impediments in its way, which the pride of human knowledge brings ; yet it is, by nature, equally under the Darkness of Sin and the sentence of Death ; and the same Divine illumination and quickening is as necessary in the one case as in the other. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."¹ The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Truth, of whom the Lord said to His disciples, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."² And the word of promise is passed, with reference to the Spirit of Truth, "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find."³

Unbelief of the Word of God—a doubt of His Truth—was the sin by which man fell, the evil root within the heart which yielded the fruits of disobedience. Sin is still the same, it cannot change its nature ; all disobedience has its root in unbelief. Unbelief is the barrier to all the holiness and happiness that would ever follow from that walking with God in all things, which is the result of faith. "According to your faith be it unto you,"⁴ is the rule by

¹ Rom. viii. 9.² John, xvi. 13, 14.³ Luke, xi. 9.⁴ Matt. ix. 29.

which the fulness of all heavenly grace and blessing is imparted. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."¹ Sin arrayed all the truth of God against man; therefore it is only in Jesus Christ that faith can find any rest for the sole of her foot.² Apart from Christ, the attributes of God would present to the eye of faith, not a dreary waste of waters, but a consuming fire.³ His Holiness, His Justice, and His Power, eternally forbid the sinner's approach to Him, and render approach impossible. But when the sinner puts on the Lord Jesus Christ,⁴ then he is clothed with God's own holiness. Of such it is said, "Ye are complete in Him;"⁵—"Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption."⁶ He hath made Him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, *that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;*⁷—that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.⁸ It is with reference to Christ, that God has said of the sinner, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me."⁹ "For in Him," the Apostle says, "all the promises of God are yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the

¹ Mark, ix. 23.² Gen. viii. 8, 9.³ Heb. xii. 29.⁴ Rom. xiii. 14.⁵ Col. ii. 10.⁶ 1 Cor. i. 30.⁷ 2 Cor. v. 21.⁸ Gal. iv. 5, 6.⁹ Isa. xxvii. 5.

glory of God by us.”¹ And the same Apostle says, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: that I may be found in Him.”²

If you observe the Scripture History, from the time when the first promise of a Redeemer was given to Adam, you will see all the dealings of God with man tending to this point—to destroy the strength of unbelief within them, and to train them up in faith. In all ages, faith in God has been the distinguishing mark of His children. When the Apostle enumerates a list of the saints who lived under the Old Testament Dispensation, faith is the mark by which each one is recognised. Without faith, he tells us, it is impossible to please God.³ And when the Son of God was come, He taught in words, words which were spirit and life,⁴ that which He had taught before by the dispensations of His Providence. Pleading with man face to face,⁵ He reasoned with them against their unbelief. When the Jews inquired of Him what they should do, that they might work the works of God, it was to this sole point of faith in Him that He directed them: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent;”⁶ proving that faith in Jesus is necessary to every act by which God can be glori-

¹ 2 Cor. i. 20.

² Philip. iii. 8, 9.

³ Heb. xi.

⁴ John, vi. 63.

⁵ Ezek. xx. 35.

⁶ John, vi. 29.

fied, and the means by which every Heavenly grace can alone be received.

Nothing seemed so dear to Him as the faith of a sinner's heart—that God might be glorified in them, and they saved in Him. It was to renew this faith in the hearts of fallen men, that He left His Father's presence, and His Father's Kingdom, and came to suffer shame and death on earth. He would ask of those who came to Him, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?"¹ Or when He gave the blessing, He would tell them that their faith won it from Him—"Thy faith hath saved thee."² "Thy faith hath made thee whole."³ He would meet and encourage true faith at its lowest point: "Be not afraid, only believe."⁴ "Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"⁵ "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"⁶ And nothing seemed to have such power to call forth His commendation; and alas! knowing the hold of unbelief upon the soul of man, to awaken His wonder, as the evidence of a faith that would not yield.⁷ In the 2nd of Peter, 1st chapter, and 1st verse, the Apostle calls it "Precious Faith." The Philippian jailor, turned from attempting self-destruction, and fresh from the guilt of adding to the afflictions of

¹ Matt. ix. 28.

² Luke, vii. 50; xviii. 42.

³ Matt. ix. 22. Mark, v. 34.

⁴ Mark, v. 36.

⁵ John, xi. 40.

⁶ Matt. xiv. 31.

⁷ Matt. viii. 10; xv. 21-28.

the people of the Lord ; and the Ethiopian Eunuch, studying the Sacred Scriptures in the lonely desert, as he returned from his long journey, undertaking to worship the true God, are both directed to the same object ;—Faith in Jesus, the one requirement from both.

Will you not take your place, like Mary, at the feet of the Truth, hearing His words, and learning daily more of Him in all things ? No one else can teach and enable you truly to discharge every duty, fill every relationship, and meet every demand in life. His Truth will deepen every joy, and lighten every sorrow. When David wandered from His feet, he could find no other place of peace ; he could only say, “Return unto thy Rest, O my soul !” He, in whom are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge,¹ in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,² asks the faith of your heart, as the dearest offering you can bring, as that which He left His Throne and laid down His life to win. “Yea, He loved the people ; all His Saints are in Thy hand : and they sat down at Thy feet ; every one shall receive of Thy words.”³ The more you study His word, with earnest prayer for the Spirit of Truth, and the more you look to Him in every thing, the stronger will your faith become, and the more constant will be your desire and effort to obey. Faith is a living principle, renewed within the heart

¹ Col. ii. 2, 3.

² Col. ii. 9.

³ Deut. xxxiii. 3.

by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, and according to its strength it will manifest itself in obedience. That faith in God, which is not inseparable from the desire and effort to obey Him, is but presumption—faith's counterfeit, with reference to which David prays, "Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."¹ That trust in God which is unaccompanied by the desire and effort to do His Will, is not trust, but presumption. Nothing will so confirm your faith as the effort of obedience: nothing so weaken it as wilful disobedience.

We can only be true when we speak of things as they are; but the Truth speaks, and all things instantly assimilate themselves to His word. He says, "Be clean," and the leprosy is gone, and health is there, meeting the word as it falls from His lips.² He says, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," and the child awakes from refreshing slumber, recruited in every limb.³ He said to the Nobleman, who came to beseech Him for his dying child, "Thy son liveth,"⁴ and as He spake, the tide of sickness ebbed, and health invigorated the dying frame. The moment that you truly come to Jesus Christ, you have in that moment passed from Death unto Life. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they

¹ Ps. xix. 13.² Matt. viii. 2.³ Matt. ix. 24.⁴ John, iv. 46-53.

shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”¹ And what He accomplishes for you, He can and will accomplish in you, if your heart be set to learn of Him. He quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.² If you come to Him now, whatever your state may be, He can change it ; whatever your need, He can supply it. But the hour is coming when the Truth will in one moment set the seal of eternity upon every human character, fixing it as it is then found, for ever—“ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”³ “ Wherefore, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”⁴

¹ Isa. i. 18. ² Rom. iv. 17. ³ Rev. xxii. 11. ⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 14.

CHAPTER III.

“GOD IS LOVE.”—1 John, iv. 16.

WHEN the Light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, shines into the heart, it calls forth not only its confidence, but its love also. As it is impossible truly to know God, and not to trust Him; so it is equally impossible truly to know and not to love Him. Yet the number of those in whom the love of God dwells is comparatively few. As regards our knowledge of God and our faith and love towards Him, it is easy to be self-deceived; having the semblance but not the reality; that which rests in the head, but dwells not in the heart. We look upon the works of God; we see the ways of His Providence; and we hear of Him in the Sacred Scriptures; from all which we cannot fail to gather a knowledge of God in our natural understanding; in the same way in which we gain a knowledge on any other subject that is constantly open to our observation. From this knowledge a trust in God, and a regard for Him, naturally arise. We can speak of His power, His wisdom, His goodness, as

manifested in the works of His hand, and the acts of His Providence; we may feel His mercy to be great in giving His Son to die for sinners, and we may hope to be partakers in the benefit of His death. Yet, if we will honestly investigate, one day *may* be sufficient to prove to us that it is the knowledge of the head, not the understanding of the heart; and that our faith and love are but shadows which change with their object. This too frequently continues undiscovered: but it need not be so in our case, if we ask ourselves, and faithfully answer the inquiry—Do I truly put my trust in God?—Is His Word the study and the rule of my life? do I trust my present as well as my future happiness to Him, assured that in keeping His commandments there is great reward,¹ and that my highest happiness here, as well as hereafter, lies in following His Will? If this is the clear decision of your judgment, the abiding desire of your heart, and effort of your life, then, however frequent may be your falls, you have indeed an evidence of a living faith within, a faith which, though its fruit may often seem to fail, still lives in desire, and blossoms again in effort, springing from a root that cannot die. It is the same with regard to the love of God. If His Word meet no response, His call no answer, if His presence is undesired, and the thought of Him a burden, His Will an unloved fetter; must not the heart

¹ Ps. xix. 11.

be cold to Him? While if we both desire, and seek, more knowledge of Him, more of His presence, longing to be subject to His Will, endeavouring to subdue our will to His; these are evidences of a warm and living principle, and not the mere dead reflection from external objects.

The apostle St. James warns us against a faith without works; that is, against the lifeless semblance, the counterfeit, instead of the reality. St. John is no less earnest, in his first Epistle, in declaring to us that the knowledge and the love of God, if really possessed, will be manifested in their effects. We have the greater need to guard against this self-deception, because there is such beauty in the streams, which flow beside our pathway here—the Works, the Providence, the Word of God—that, unless the judgment is utterly perverted, the mind must reverence and admire. But the day is coming when the streams will be dry, when Nature will fade from our eyes, when the Providential government of God will have ended for us, when His Word will be written for us no longer; and where then shall we read His Love? Where then will our eyes find some familiar resting-place on which to trace the assurance that God is Love?

If you learn to read the love of God now in Jesus Christ, you need not fear to meet the awful Majesty of God, or to hear the demand of those attributes which nothing but perfection can satisfy. The Holi-

ness, the Justice, and the Truth of God, may all address you; you need not cast one anxious doubting look upon yourself; your justifying righteousness will be in another, even in your Surety, and He, who died for you, and has enabled you to walk on earth with Him, will not leave you then. At every requirement you will only need to say with David, "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me,"¹ If you are one with the Son of God,² the Heaven that welcomed Him will no less surely welcome you;³ and the unfettered hand of Love will delight to pour its unmeasured blessings on you.⁴ All the Love you find in Jesus is in God for you, for Jesus is the Manifestation of the Father's Love.⁵ He teaches you this, again and again, in His own words. "At that day ye shall ask in my Name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God."⁶ "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"⁷ "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him."⁸ If the eternal Fountain is yours, the streams are yours also. The

¹ Ps. xxxviii. 15. Prayer-book Version.

² John, xvii. 21.

³ John, xvii. 24.

⁴ John, xvii. 22.

⁵ 1 John, iv. 9, 10.

⁶ John, xvi. 26, 27.

⁷ John, xiv. 9.

⁸ John, xiv. 21.

stars of the heavens win our eye with a deeper feeling, than any sense of their magnificence can give, when we look on them as David did—"When I consider *Thy* heavens, the work of *Thy* fingers."¹ The lilies of the field wear a dearer charm, and win a deeper interest, when the God who clothes them is our Friend.² The voice of Nature, and the voice of knowledge in its every utterance, have these deeper tones, unheard before, instructing us in the Love of God; filling the chambers of the mind with all precious and pleasant riches,³ teaching us to *refuse* the evil and to *choose* the good.⁴

Sin raised a barrier between the sinner and the Love of God, which the sinner could never pass. If a Redeemer had not appeared, every trace of the Love of God would have faded away from earth. But though the truth that God is Love has not been effaced from the world in which we dwell; though every eye which reason has enlightened may read it there; man has no power to regain possession of that Love which was once the crown of all his happiness, and which has within its gift the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.⁵ On every side the barrier of Sin rises up between the soul of man, and his personal reception of the Love of God. Nature in all her beauteous circle, Reason with her penetrating vision, can show no Heavenward path.

¹ Ps. viii. 3.² Matt. vi. 28-30.³ Prov. xxiv. 4.⁴ Isa. vii. 15.⁵ Ps. xvi. 11.

But by those who have ears to hear,¹ the still small voice² of God is heard directing them to one strait Gate,³ one narrow Way, one Door⁴ which will open to the sinner's knock: their ears hear the voice which says, "This is the Way, walk ye in it."⁵ Who shall reckon up the number of the Blessed who have obeyed the call of God, and found Christ Jesus the Door of Hope,⁶ the Gate of Life,⁷ the New and Living Way⁸ to God! Washed in the blood of Jesus, sanctified by His Spirit, adorned in His Righteousness, they are gathering to His Father's Kingdom, every one of them appearing before God in Zion,⁹ holy and without blame before Him in love.¹⁰

It may sometimes appear more pleasant to you to look on Nature, than to seek an unseen world: earthly objects may seem more attractive than an unseen Friend: and the light of earthly knowledge, and earthly affection, may seem to your eye to present a brighter and a warmer glow than Heavenly Knowledge and Heavenly Love. Have you never watched the first faint dawn of the morning light; faint, not because the sun is shining in less brightness, but because we are only turning towards its light? As we turn to meet it, it brightens upon us,

¹ Matt. xi. 15. ² 1 Kings, xix. 11-13. ³ Matt. vii. 13.

⁴ John, x. 9. Luke, xi. 10. ⁵ Isa. xxx. 21.

⁶ Hos. ii. 15. Col. i. 27. ⁷ John, xiv. 6.

⁸ Heb. x. 19, 20. ⁹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7. ¹⁰ Eph. i. 4.

until it reaches its noon-day splendour. The more fully you turn in everything to Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness—the Light of Heaven and earth, the more will you discern the brightness of His presence, and feel the warmth, the sunshine of His Love. And then, although His Love may be the brightness of your spring, and the beauty of your summer, spring and summer last not all the year. There is the winter of sorrow; and the winter of the grave; beneath the first you must see much that made the light of earth to you, die and pass away; beneath the second, you must fall yourself, losing sight of all that earth contains for you. But neither the winter of sorrow, nor the winter of the grave, has any power against the Light of Life—of Heavenly Love. The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow. They seek a refuge from the stormy wind and tempest before it gathers in the sky, and shall we be less wise than they?¹ Would the wintry blast delay because the swallow was not fled? would it not surely come, and the bird fall before it? The husbandman sows his seed long before the first summer day, that when the sun is warm in the heavens his corn may be ready in full ear to ripen beneath it. This is the seed-time for your harvest. Oh! remember the declaration of the Truth—“Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He

¹ Jer. viii. 7.

that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.”¹ If you live under the influence of the Love of Christ, seeking to please Him in all things, looking for His guidance and His aid, you will soon find His presence so essential to your happiness, that even on earth you could know no joy without it. It will become your Light, never to be extinguished; your Life, never to decay; your Strength, your Hope, your never-failing Refuge. The earthly joy which God bestows will be purified and deepened in its Light; while the sorrow which darkens this world cannot throw its shadow over Heavenly Love, which does but grow more bright as the light of earth declines. The prophet Habakkuk could steadfastly contemplate the failure of every earthly supply, and yet abide in the undoubting assurance that joy and rejoicing would still be his portion—such fulness had he found in God.² Of all who ever came to Him, the lips of Truth can say, “I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”³ David, looking forward to the valley of the shadow of death, could not only feel assured of deliverance out of it, but could see no terror in it, because the Light of Life, the Love of God, he knew would be with him there. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art

¹ Gal. vi. 7, 8.² Hab. iii. 17.³ Jer. xxxi. 25.

with me!"¹ The Love that had overflowed his cup in life, he knew would comfort him in death. When the martyr Stephen kneeled amid a shower of stones, and amid the fierce looks of wicked and cruel men, he felt no chill, though every human heart was frozen round him; for the Love of God, in which he had lived and walked, so filled his eyes with Heavenly Light, that when, for the last time, he looked to Heaven, it opened to his view, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The angry face of man could bring no terror then; and the very stones must have been welcome, breaking down his prison-house of clay, setting him free, to hasten to the Heaven which was opened, waiting for him.² The little child upon the bed of death; the martyr at the stake; and the trembling believer, who walked in obedience, but in fear, all through life, have found the gate of death changed for the presence of the Son of Man: nothing seen but Him, nothing felt but His Love; and nature's last utterance has expressed a joy unspeakable and full of glory.³ If it be your care to walk with Jesus by the way, it will be His to meet you at the end. David knew well the connexion, when he bound the two together. God has joined them, and presumption cannot separate—"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel; and afterward receive me to glory!"⁴

¹ Ps. xxiii. 4, 5.² Acts, vii. 55-60.³ 1 Pet. i. 3-9.⁴ Ps. lxxiii. 24.

This inseparable union—the life of faith and love on earth, issuing in the abundant entrance¹ to the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was strikingly manifested before the eyes of men in the case of one of our martyrs in the sixteenth century. Not more strikingly than in our own day, but a single instance may suffice. One of the Glovers of Mancetter, being apprehended and cast into prison, fell into great dejection of spirit. He had been taken from his sick-bed, and, weak in body, his mind was probably enfeebled also. He had pursued a quiet life, believing and obeying the Word of God: but when cast into prison he lost all sense of the presence of God, no longer beheld the light of His countenance, and darkness and dejection seemed his only possession. But they could not force his faith to yield, nor his love to deny the Truth of God. He witnessed a good confession, giving up nothing, though the joy of all seemed dead for ever, and received the sentence of death. Augustine Bernard, the aged Latimer's servant, and a ministering angel to the martyrs, used to visit him and cheer him with the certain hope that his Light would yet arise. On the morning of the day appointed for his death, Augustine came as usual; but all was darkness in the martyr's soul, though his purpose wavered not—to die rather than deny. Augustine promised to bear him company by min-

¹ 2 Pet..i. 11.

gling with the crowd. At the appointed hour they led him forth, no gleam of Heavenly Light to cheer his steps, but still kept by the Power of God through faith unto salvation.¹ Until, as they turned a corner and came in sight of the stake, the glory of that Light broke upon his longing eyes, and stopping suddenly, he twice clapped his hands, exclaiming, "O Austin, He is come! He is come!" Then pressed on and passed away from earth, as if unconscious of all suffering, wrapped in the Light and Life, and Love of Jesus. The glory of that Heavenly Light may not always be manifested on earth; but the disembodied spirit of the child of God, at longest, cannot wait beyond the moment of departure. For the child of God, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.² "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for He shall receive me."³

It is not alone in sorrow, and in death, that you need the Son of God. Do you not need Him even now? Do you not need the Light of His presence, to guide your steps; the strength of His Spirit, to enable you to walk according to His will; the sense of His Love, to assure you of forgiveness; and the washing of His blood, to put away your sin? However faint your present apprehension of His Love may be, you cannot seek in vain. No heartfelt petition offered in accordance with His Will can fail; in the Lord's

¹ 1 Pet. i. 5.

² 2 Cor. v. 8.

³ Ps. xlix. 15.

own time and way it will receive an abundant and enduring return: no desire can live unnoticed: no effort pass unblest: no sigh unheard: no tear unseen: but all for ever written before Him: that which is past and future with us, being ever present in His sight. Walking with God, His Love will become the golden cord on which your life is strung, giving oneness and permanency to the whole; all that is evil dropping from its touch, all that is according to the Will of God abiding for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

“LO, I COME TO DO THY WILL, O GOD.”—Heb. x. 7.

IN the Lord Jesus Christ we are permitted to look, not only upon the mighty God,¹ but upon the perfection of our own nature. His life on earth lies open to our view, clearly written out before our eyes, showing us the perfect knowledge of God, resulting in perfect trust and perfect love; and perfect trust and love leading to perfect obedience. This sinless life, which Jesus led in the midst of temptation, sorrow, and suffering, He gives to all who come to Him as their justifying Righteousness.² But it is also given as our example.³ Those who are not willing to learn of Jesus, cannot be clothed by Him. Jesus is the Truth, and He will put no outward raiment upon any, which is not true to their inmost spirit. If the heart be His, the garment of salvation, the robe of righteousness,⁴ may be His also, but not otherwise. God, who has chosen His people, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, has equally

¹ Isa. ix. 6. ² Jer. xxiii. 6. ³ 1 Pet. ii. 21. ⁴ Isa. lxi. 10.

chosen them to be His, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.¹ It is by obedience that the existence, and the strength, of faith and love are manifested. In the history of the renewed life of every child of God, you may trace the image of Jesus. The perfect lines which you behold in Him are indeed faint and broken in them; but still it is His image; and in the day when they behold Him as He is it will become true in every part.²

In looking back on the history of the servants of the Lord, we see the *issue* of events; but it was not so with them, theirs was the unquestioning obedience of faith: had they trusted in their own hearts or leaned to their own understandings, they had surely not obeyed. But they knew in whom they believed, and therefore their faith, and love, and obedience, stood the trial. The sky was clear above his head, and gave no threatening of a coming judgment, through the long years while "Noah, warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."³ Abraham left his country, and his kindred, exchanging every earthly prospect for the promise of his God; "he went out, not knowing whither he went."⁴ He laid the child of promise on the altar, in the unques-

¹ 1 Pet. i. 2.² 1 John, iii. 2.³ Heb. xi. 7.⁴ Heb. xi. 8.

tioning obedience of faith. All present joy, and future hope, blossomed in that child; and if the blossom falls untimely on the ground, where then will be Abraham's hope, and the promise of Abraham's God—"In Isaac shall thy seed be called?"¹ But Abraham questioned not, he doubted not, he delayed not.² He knew that it was his to obey, and he left it to God to reconcile and fulfil His own word. And his expectation was not disappointed. His was no blind obedience—the obedience of a slave to a master—it was the enlightened obedience of faith: and this command proved the means of leading his faith on to that great truth, the Resurrection of the dead, which had never as yet been illustrated to the eye of man;³ and at which the learning of Athens mocked, two thousand years later, when Paul stood before the court of Areopagus, not merely to prophesy the fact, but to declare its accomplishment in Jesus.⁴

The obedience rendered by Saul and by Jehu, kings of Israel, both of them conspicuous in the earlier part of their reigns for their profession of service to God, was wanting in every particular that could render it the obedience which is acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. It did not arise from a true knowledge of God, it was not the obedience of faith and love. Saul slew the Amalekites at God's command;

¹ Gen. xxi. 12.

² Gen. xxii.

³ Heb. xi. 17-19.

⁴ Acts, xvii. 32.

but he spared of the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the lambs, and all that was good in his eyes. He had not respect to God, and to His commandment, but to the nature of the objects to which the commandment referred. So far as it suited his own ends, so far he obeyed, but there he stopped; thinking to atone for his disobedience by offering up the fruit of that very disobedience in the service of God. But he had rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord had rejected him. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."¹ Jehu could say, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord."² He slew the house of Ahab, and cut off the worshippers of Baal; but he spared the golden calves which were in Bethel and in Dan: he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart. His very obedience became sin, and was avenged by God,³ *because its motive was not right*. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁴ We are ready to regard the magnitude of an action; but God regards the principle from which it flows. In David you see the blessed contrast; he rises from his falls only to walk more humbly and more closely with God:⁵ his faith and love were true: it was the desire of his heart and the aim of his life to walk with God. "I have esteemed Thy precepts, con-

¹ 1 Sam. xv.² 2 Kings, x. 16.³ Hos. i. 4.⁴ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.⁵ Ps. li.

cerning all things, to be right: therefore I hate every false way.”¹ “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.”² The Lord has said, “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”³ We can never lightly transgress the Will of God without teaching others to do the same; as powerfully, perhaps, by example as we could by words. What need have we to pray with David, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually!”⁴

The necessity for the obedience of faith, was the lesson which the Prophet taught Naaman the Syrian Captain, when he came to be healed by the God of Israel. He expected the Prophet to come out to him, and to work the cure, in the name of his God. Instead of which he receives the simplest message—“Go, wash in Jordan seven times: and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” Naaman altogether overlooks the one point of importance—the command of God, and his obedience to it; and he reasons only upon the suitability of the *means*, he is offended with their simplicity; and if washing is to cure, he judges the rivers of his own land to be better than all the waters of Israel; and

¹ Ps. cxix. 128. ² Ibid. 6. ³ Matt. v. 19. ⁴ Ps. cxix. 117.

he goes away in a rage. But when brought by the mild persuasions of his servants to see the true point, *the obedience of faith*, then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.¹ How beautiful an illustration is this of the Gospel plan of salvation by Jesus Christ !

When the Lord dwelt among men we find Him constantly putting faith to the test of obedience. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam ;" and he went and washed, and came seeing.² "Go, show yourselves unto the Priests ; and it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."³ The man with the withered hand, was commanded to stretch it forth ;⁴ the man sick of the palsy, to take up his bed and go unto his house :⁵ in both which instances, the disease had taken away the natural power to obey : but the willing mind was required, and it answered to the call ; the attempt was made in the obedience of faith, and the God who commanded it crowned it with success. The power of God works with man's will, when that will turns obediently to Him.⁶ "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways."⁷ "Before they call, I will answer ;

¹ 2 Kings, v.² John, ix. 7.³ Luke, xvii. 14.⁴ Matt. xii. 10-13.⁵ Mark, ii. 10-12.⁶ Ps. cx. 3.⁷ Isa. lxiv. 5.

and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”¹ In Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom;² and the young man who came to Jesus, asking what he should do to inherit eternal Life;³ we see the willing and the unwilling mind. The Lord said to Matthew, “Follow Me;” and he arose and followed Him. The same command, by way of reply, was given to the other; but he went away sorrowful: of him we never hear again; but Matthew, who had been made willing in the day of God’s power, became one of the four Evangelists of the world. Obedience is the proof which Jesus has left on record of His love to His Heavenly Father—“That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.”⁴ He could say, “I do always those things that please Him.”⁵ This perfect obedience was rendered in a world where, to Him, every step was suffering, and every sight was sorrow; for He looked on that which He had made so fair, and which was now so foul—Man, abominable and filthy, drinking iniquity like water.⁶ Obedience is the test to which the faith and love of our hearts must be subjected in order to prove their sincerity, to humble, and purify, and strengthen. “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”⁷ “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he

¹ Isa. lxx. 24.² Matt. ix. 9.³ Mark, x. 17-22.⁴ John, xiv. 31.⁵ John, viii. 29.⁶ Job, xv. 16.⁷ John, xiv. 15.

it is that loveth Me; and he shall be loved of My Father.”¹ “He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings.”² “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”³ By every wilful act of disobedience to the Will of God, we turn away and refuse the test by which our adoption is evidenced. While by every effort to obey, we own and honour that test; and strengthen the faith by which alone we can be enabled to meet its demands. “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he seemeth to have.”⁴

Nothing but the sight of Jesus, nothing but a view of Him in the light of truth, can ever stamp His image on our hearts and lives: nothing but this can renew us in knowledge, after the image of Him who created us.⁵ But this will; it will transform the natural into the spiritual; the earthly into the heavenly: and the more our eye is directed to God in Christ, the more strongly shall we bear His likeness. Saul of Tarsus had been taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers; and was zealous towards God.⁶ But he had no true knowledge of God; for he had sought Him by the works of the law, and not by faith in the promised Redeemer. Not having the true knowledge of God,

¹ John, xiv. 21.

² John, xiv. 24.

³ John, xv. 10.

⁴ Luke, viii. 18.

⁵ Col. iii. 10.

⁶ Acts, xxii. 3.

not walking in the light of Truth, he mistook that for the Will of God, which was of all things most displeasing in His sight—He thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.¹ While breathing out threatenings and slaughter,² a light from heaven, above the brightness of the Sun, blinded his natural vision, and enlightened the eyes of his understanding. He had heard the voice of Jesus in His word, recorded by His servants; he had heard it in the Scriptures of the Old Testament; he had heard it in the confessions of His martyred disciples; but his heart was dead, and therefore his ears were deaf: but now it penetrated his soul; the dead heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived.³ He had seen the glory of God reflected in the holy Stephen's face, when he stood before the council confessing Jesus:⁴ he had seen the love of God portrayed, and heard it from his lips, when his last breath was spent in praying for his murderers;⁵ but his soul grew only darker and colder than before: but now he kneels before the man Christ Jesus, and all his future life is changed; he passes from Darkness to Light; from Death to Life; from breathing threatening and slaughter, to the voice of prayer, and love, and blessing; all indicated by his first inquiry, all involved in it—"Lord! what wouldst Thou have me

¹ Acts, xxvi. 9.

² Acts, ix.

³ John, v. 25.

⁴ Acts, vi. 15.

⁵ Acts, vii. 57-60; viii. 1-4.

to do?" All his after-life remained true to this, its first heavenly impression, because he never ceased to look steadfastly to God in Christ. Every broken, wavering line, every inconsistency in the Christian character, is the result of looking away from Christ. To do the Will of God, is the highest aim in life that earth or Heaven can offer: to do it from love to Him, is the highest motive that saint or angel can have. The Will of God may call us to the lowliest duties, the humblest employment in life; but if our aim is to do His Will, our motive, love to Him, He is glorified by the lowliest as well as by the highest service. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.¹

The one command to man in innocence was—"Eat not of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day ye eat thereof ye shall surely die." But now that man has eaten, and is spiritually dead, dead to God, and under the sentence of eternal death, the Love of God has tried yet another test, by which man may attain unto the possession of infinitely more than he lost. God has given a commandment unto Life: given His beloved Son as the Bread of God, which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the world.² The command now is—"Eat, and live for ever." "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man

¹ 1 John, v. 3.

² John, vi. 33.

may eat thereof and not die.”¹ As the partaking of food is necessary to our natural life, so is the reception of the Lord Jesus into our hearts necessary to our Heavenly and eternal life. As we should die naturally without food, so are we spiritually dead, dead to God, and dead to the eternal life of Heaven, without Christ. If we have not received Christ into our hearts, as our Life, our Light, if we are not living in dependence upon Him, living by faith in Him, we have as yet no life in us. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”² This seemed a hard saying to those who heard it;³ and so it seems to many now. But those who know what it is to have Christ in them, the Hope of glory, understand its meaning well. The presence of Christ is dearer to them than their earthly life; they could not enjoy any happiness without it; and they know that the death of the body⁴ can only reveal to them more of His presence, who is the Life of their spirits; and who will raise their mortal bodies also, made like unto His glorious body.⁵ Jesus is their spiritual food in all things. They turn to Him as their Light in darkness; their Guide in difficulty; their Guard in temptation; their Atonement in every transgression; their Comfort in sorrow; their Blessing in every joy; their

¹ John, vi. 50.² John, vi. 53.³ John, vi. 60.⁴ 2 Cor. v. 8.⁵ Rom. viii. 11. Philip. iii. 20, 21.

Victory over sin ; their Life in death : they receive all things from Him ; they will not receive anything without Him : if they do, they find it to be as much their loss and sorrow, as their sin : for all which is separated from Him must sooner or later come to nothing.

This command—the reception of Jesus Christ into the heart, and living in all things by faith in Him—includes every other. All the Will of God can be fulfilled by us, only so far as this first command is obeyed. “Without Me ye can do nothing.”¹ And Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”² “If a man love Me, he will keep My words ; and My Father will love him ; and We will come unto him, *and make Our abode with him.*”³ The injunction of the Apostle by the Holy Spirit is, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted, and built up in Him ; and established in the faith.”⁴ The Lord Jesus shows us that all the Will of God is included in the Law of Heavenly love.⁵ While without this love, all knowledge, and all faith, and all gifts, would profit us nothing : though we were to devote our goods to feed the poor, and give our bodies to the fire, if the love of God were

¹ John, xv. 5.² Rev. iii. 20.³ John, xiv. 23.⁴ Col. ii. 6, 7.⁵ Matt. xxii. 35–40.

not the constraining motive, it would profit us nothing.¹

We have seen a forest-tree, with its thousand branches, and its innumerable leaves. Its root is hidden under ground; but every branch, and every leaf, draws all its life from it; separated from the root it would die. In like manner all our life is living or dead in the sight of God, and as regards the world to come, by its having or not having Jesus as its root within the heart. The larger events and duties of our life may be as the branches, and the trifles of the passing moment, with our words, and thoughts, and feelings, as the countless leaves; but these, from the greatest to the least, will be living or dead, according as we in all things depend upon the living root, and as we receive our life from Him. The first beginning of the love of God within the heart may be small, as the acorn which an infant's hand can grasp; but there is the germ of life—Life everlasting in that Love; the more carefully we watch for its increase, and keep, and water it,—the more will it expand and grow; striking deeper root within, and manifesting itself in the sight of God and man; “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”²

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3.

² Eph. i. 6.

CHAPTER V.

"WHERE THERE IS NEITHER GREEK NOR JEW, CIRCUMCISION NOR UNCIRCUMCISION, BARBARIAN, SCYTHIAN, BOND NOR FREE : BUT CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL."—Col. iii. 11.

HEAVENLY Truth, as it is unchangeable in its nature, so it is also in its effects. The varieties of human character, human attainments, and human possessions, are endless. But every one who receives the Truth in the love of it, reflects, in some measure, its Heavenly image. This image, when it truly exists, is often more manifest to the eye of God than to the eye of man; because it does not change every outward action, but it raises every motive, and purifies every feeling. Many a strong desire and hidden effort fails, again and again, before man; but He who has caused it to be written, that "The desire of a man is His kindness,"¹ takes notice of the secret will to obey, blots out the failure, raises the fallen, and renews the strength of those who wait on Him. Elijah thought he stood alone, but God said, "Yet have I left me seven

¹ Prov. xix. 22.

thousand in Israel; all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”¹ But still, according to the root within, so will the blossom and fruit be found. If the root be Heavenly, the life will not be earthly in its aims and bearings. Whatever it may accomplish here, it will be subject to a Heavenly Law, seeking to please a Heavenly Master. Both in the spirit within, and the outward life, so far as Heavenly Truth is known, and loved, and obeyed, its Divine image will be reflected. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are Heavenly.² The children of the Truth are not only alike, in that they all, in some degree, bear their Father’s image, but they are one in all enduring things. They have one Object, one Hope, one Home. They have also one Way, one Guide; they have the same enemies within and without; and they are subject to the same temptations and trials. They are washed in the same Fountain;³ clothed in the same raiment,⁴ and sealed with the same Seal.⁵ They are all one in Christ Jesus. He is their meeting-point; all who abide in Him are essentially united, and will experience the blessed fulfilment of that prayer—“I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that

¹ 1 Kings, xix. 14–18.² 1 Cor. xv. 48.³ Zech. xiii. 1.⁴ Rev. vii. 9.⁵ 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. iv. 30.

Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."¹

If Abraham, Isaiah, or St. John, could stand beside the holiest saints of God who walk the earth to-day, there would be no strangeness between them. The name of Jesus on their lips, His love within their hearts, His image in their life, would at once unite them, as elder and younger brethren of the same Family, the same Home. The world, with all the variety of the changes it has known, might pass by them unnoticed, while they together spoke of their Father's House, and of Him, who both prepared them for it, and it for them.

It is with a peculiar feeling, a sense of the near and abiding tie between them, that the children of God hear of any member of their Father's Family. In the Scriptures, they read of those whom God has given, as witnesses to His Truth in all the world; whose names are household words, known and loved in the Nursery, the College, the Cottage, and the Palace. We might now visit the tents of Abraham; follow Joseph from his father's house, through his eventful life, until his dying act of faith;² or live again in thought, the life of Israel's Shepherd King: but, in making a choice, we rather turn to the holy Mountain, where the Son of God was offered up a sacrifice for Sin. There, around the Cross, we find gathered the representatives of every

¹ John, xvii. 23.

² Heb. xi. 22.

class. We look upon each of them in immediate connexion with the Lord. We trace the evidences of their new and Heavenly Birth. We learn the feeling entertained by them towards Christ, the King of Glory, when beheld only in His humiliation; and we learn His feeling towards them, so far as earthly glimpses can reveal to our dim vision the Love which is infinite and eternal. By this means we may be enabled, in some degree, to ascertain whether we may hope that we are one with them: whether we have received the Son of God, and have so become the children of God.¹

Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.—John, xix. 25.

With the personal history of her, whom all generations shall call blessed,² every reader of the New Testament is acquainted. But the Lord has given a spiritual application of this honoured term of natural relationship, which application we cannot too constantly remember, nor too earnestly seek to attain—"Whosoever shall do the Will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My Brother, and Sister, and Mother."³ If we would be found within the circle of nearest relationship to the Son of God, if we would dwell in the same eternal Home, beloved and honoured as Brother, Sister, or Mother;

¹ John, i. 12.

² Luke, i. 48.

³ Matt. xii. 50.

then we must live on earth to do the Will of His Father in Heaven. This is the one requirement—that the authority of God be supreme over us. Nothing else will be accepted as a substitute for it—no self-denying service in some particulars, no strict adherence in all things to our own standard of right; the Judge of quick and dead offers but one test, by that we must stand or fall—“The Will of My Father in Heaven!”

There is sometimes a danger of our not forming, in the first instance, a true judgment of the Will of God:—A danger of our taking a partial view of it, considering it as having reference to certain acts; and then the feeling arises, that we are only doing the Will of God when we are performing those acts: this partial view is the result of a want of clearer vision. More Light will show us, that the least word which drops from our lips will be subjected to exactly the same test, as the most deliberate act of our lives;¹ if not found in conformity with the Will of God, the one is a sin as well as the other. In every thought, feeling, word, and action, we are walking in obedience, or disobedience, to the Will of God. No one can avoid this test. It is the straight, unbroken line, which stretches along the path of every child of man. Everything we do, and think, and say, remains in accordance with, or erring from, this unbending line of the Will of God. The

¹ Matt. xii. 36, 37.

retrospect of one moment will be sufficient, when, in the Light of Truth, the past shall be laid open, and we look back on days, and months, and years, beholding all our life in connexion with the Will of God, all lying untouched and unchanged as we left it, in our hurried progress ; the error of every moment made visible to us then, by the clear vision of that holy Will. O who could bear the retrospect ! One glance would be sufficient—that God may be justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges :¹ the condemnation of our own hearts would be hopeless, as the sentence from the lips of the Judge — “Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me.”²

In this we see the blessed security of those who walk in the Light of the Lord — that what others do not believe, until Eternity reveals it to them, they see while yet the day of grace and mercy lasts. The more closely we walk with Jesus, the more shall we receive of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s first work is to convince the heart of its sin.³ He shows us the Holy Will of God, shows it to us with daily increasing clearness, if we seek with increasing earnestness : and from this, the blessed effects follow, which end in safety and in Heaven. The first effect is a consciousness of our innumerable sins ; and then in and by the same Heavenly Light we find a Sa-

¹ Ps. li. 4.² Luke, xix. 27.³ John, xvi. 8, 14.

viour from all sin, One who can blot out all our transgressions, so that even at the Judgment-Day we need not fear to look back over our whole life, knowing that the Blood of Jesus will cover all our sin. Another effect is, that it leads us by the grace of God to seek at once to take the Holy Will of God as our rule of life. And then it becomes our desire and effort to do His Will in all things, to seek to please Him, to approve ourselves to Him in all we do. (Acts, xxiv. 16.) The more we seek His Holy Spirit, endeavouring in our daily life to walk with Jesus, the more Light we shall receive to know the Will of God, and the more grace to obey it. And though our obedience must ever be defective, yet, bringing all to Jesus Christ, He will take its sin away, and present it Himself to His Heavenly Father as the first-fruits of His Spirit, in those whom God has given Him.¹ And another effect will be, that thus walking in the Light of Truth, seeing the holy Will of God, and our own departures from it, we shall feel our need of a better Righteousness than our own, and we shall seek to be found in Jesus, not having our own righteousness, but the Righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by faith.² O how different then will be our retrospect, looking back at that awful moment, when alteration has become impossible ! If found in Jesus, not a single sin will meet

¹ John, xvii. 6, 9, 10. Rom. viii. 23.

² Philip. iii. 8.

our eye, to affright and condemn; all along the length of our past life will be the sprinkling of that Blood which cleanseth from all sin. If we have walked with God, along that period will lie every act, and word, and thought, every feeling, desire, and effort, which was subject to the law of God, all witnessing to the truth of faith and love, all witnessing to the grace of Christ, all bringing glory to God. And for justification, that the child of God may be perfect, even as his Father in Heaven is perfect; he is arrayed in God's own Righteousness—Complete in Jesus.¹ “Who, then, shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”²

The more clearly we discern the Will of God, and learn to walk by it, the dearer will it become. No one truly walks by it who does not learn to desire and love it, for the Will of God is a law of love. His service is perfect freedom; those who obey Him truly, obey Him not from necessity, but choice. Yet you will find your own will continually rebelling against the Will of God, and while you would do good, evil will often be present with you. An evil thought will arise before you are aware; words afterwards regretted, will be uttered almost before you know what they are; and you will often act, and then too late repent. How can we meet this evil tendency—the evil impulses of our own nature? Not by waiting till the occasion calls them forth,

¹ Col. ii. 10.

² Rom. viii. 33.

and then thinking to arrest them; they will be too quick, too strong for us, if this be our expectation. David knew the true secret of success; he sought to purify the fountain of his heart, that its streams might be pure: he watered the heavenly root, that it might strengthen and fill the heart in which it grew. He says, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."¹ "O how I love Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day."² The Law of God was kept within his heart, therefore its light fell on his path—"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."³ "Through Thy commandments I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way."⁴ And when he asks the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" this is his answer, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."⁵ The more richly that the Word of Christ dwells in your heart, the more will it manifest itself in your life. Whatever we cultivate within the heart, that will be the fruit our life will yield. If our own will is indulged—our life will be in conformity with it. If vain dreams—then our life will be profitless and vain. If human learning—then earthly knowledge will be the result. But if the word of God be our dearest study—the seed we take most pains to plant and cultivate—then a life in harmony with His Will

¹ Ps. cxix. 11.² Ibid. v. 97.³ Ibid. v. 105.⁴ Ibid. v. 104.⁵ Ibid. v. 9.

must follow. The Heavenly plant, growing still amidst many roots of bitterness, often blighted in its blossoms and its fruit, but still our chiefest care, and therefore still gaining strength.

Let not the edges of time, the hurried morning, and the close of the worn-out evening, be thought sufficient for that which is to be the means of changing our whole life, renewing all our heart, enlightening,¹ sanctifying,² rejoicing.³ If at first its study seem a task, it will itself awake the love within, which can make that study our delight, if we only persevere in its pursuit. Walking by the Light we have received, and ever seeking more, the Will of God will become, even here, the first desire of our hearts, our spirit's rest, the peace and blessing of our hourly life; and hereafter our title to our Father's Kingdom—"According to the Will of God."—Gal. i. 4.

When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother; Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.— John xix. 26, 27.

John, the son of Zebedee, was a lowly fisherman upon the lake of Gennesaret. And now he is known in earth and Heaven as "The disciple whom Jesus loved." He received of his Divine Master's

¹ Ps. cxix. 130.

² John, xvii. 17.

³ Jer. xv. 16.

fulness, grace for grace.¹ Heavenly love gained possession of his heart, and became even on earth the atmosphere in which he lived and breathed. St. John dwells less than the other three evangelists on the actions of the Lord; he seems to have listened for and treasured within his soul every word that dropped from His lips; his affections embalmed them, his thoughts dwelt upon them, they were his spirit's food; and in him pre-eminently among fallen men we see restored the image of God—Who is Love. It is from St. John that we hear of the great and precious promises, given by the Lord before He left the world, to sweeten the bitter pang of separation, to gild the night of absence.² It is from him we learn the thoughts of peace that were given to sustain the hearts of all who believe in Jesus, in a world in which His personal presence is no longer with them.³ It is from St. John we learn the lesson of self-renouncing love, which the Lord of Heaven and earth taught to all who follow Him, when He laid aside His garment, girded Himself with a towel, and washed His disciples' feet:⁴ and from him we learn the prayer, with which, before He suffered, the Son of God encircled, as with an impregnable wall of everlasting security, every one who should believe on His Name.⁵ We find St. John ever nearest to the Lord. When only a few were permitted by the Son of God to be with Him,

¹ John, i. 16. ² Ibid. xiv. ³ Ibid. xvi. ⁴ Ibid. xiii. ⁵ Ibid. xvii.

St. John was one of them. At supper we read of him as filling the nearest place: and at the cross he alone of all the twelve stands by his dying Master's side. It was John who made such haste to run to the sepulchre, with none but the repentant and forgiven Peter to bear him company. And it is from him we hear the particulars of those last interviews on earth, the preciousness of whose record deepens to the heart, the more it feels its need of the assurance of the Saviour's Love.¹

If we would possess the Heavenly and enduring distinction of *one whom Jesus loves*, we must tread in the beloved disciple's steps — we must dwell in heart with Jesus, and live upon His word. Martha laboured much to serve Him at a distance; but Mary sat at His feet, and heard His words. You may, like Martha, prepare a feast for Jesus, and yet, like Mary, never leave His side. You may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, instruct the ignorant, and yet never lose sight of your Lord. You may fulfil every duty in life, pursue every employment, beneath His eye, at His side, in conscious nearness and realised dependence. If your heart be chiefly set, not so much on the amount you desire to accomplish, as on the keeping Christ in view, and doing all with Him and in His sight, you will one day find that His presence, His grace, His blessing, have

¹ John, xxi.

accomplished far more than would have been done with a greater show of work, and less dependence upon Him. If you would bear the image of Heavenly Love, you, like the beloved disciple, must treasure up His words within your heart. We do not need to ask St. John his estimate of the words of Jesus. It is plain that he had fed upon them until he could not live without them. He could say with David, "The Law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."¹ With Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart."² We are sure that when he went, they led him; when he slept, they kept him; when he awaked, they talked with him; for he bound them upon his heart.³ Yet he was by nature even as others,⁴ born in sin, dead to God, and without faith and love towards Jesus; but the Son of God had called him, and he had obeyed that call:⁵ he had set his heart to follow Jesus in the way. At first he must have felt much strangeness towards Him; but he listened to His words, and looked upon His life, and walked with Him day by day; until he could say, as David had said long before, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."⁶ If you pursue the same

¹ Ps. cxix. 72; xix. 10. ² Jer. xv. 16. ³ Prov. vi. 21, 22.

⁴ Eph. ii. 3.

⁵ Matt. iv. 21, 22. ⁶ Ps. lxxiii. 25.

course, looking for help from above, if you obey the command of Jesus, if you lay up His words within you as the treasure of your heart, if you seek to follow Jesus as your Example day by day, walking with Him in all your life; if this is your desire and aim, then your faith and love will grow, and your obedience be strengthened. You will not then need the pen of the evangelist to affix this Heavenly character upon you; the spirit of the evangelist manifested in you will prove you with no less certainty to be *one whom Jesus loves*; and of such it is said, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover them all the day long."¹

St. John stood by the Cross of Jesus. He then but little understood how deep was his own interest in that Cross; he stood beside it because his love to his Lord constrained him; but when the fuller Light of the Spirit had taught him knowledge, his heart never turned from that Cross. It was that cross which taught him the Love of God to Man; so deeply was his soul imbued with this Heavenly love, that all his life and all his words reflected its light on others. It was that Cross which so subdued all pride and vain-glory in him, that you lose sight of him, and look upon Christ in all: even when he speaks of himself in that one point of nearness to the Lord, he speaks as of another. He hides him-

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 12.

self within Christ's holy Light. It was that Cross which taught him that the highest and most blessed aim in life was to do the Will of God, whatever the path through which His Will may lead. It was that Cross which taught him that to seek the good of others is a heavenly distinction, far above the brightest earthly honour; and that those in whom self lies lowest are chiefest in God's esteem, and best prepared for the fulness of His blessing. This is his exhortation, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."¹ And this is his declaration, "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."² O let it then be our daily study to dwell in *love, that we may dwell in God, and God in us!* Every hour affords and calls for some exercise of this Heavenly grace. In this, as in every other Heavenly study, we must remember that the root is within the heart — if the heart be truly kind, the law of kindness will be written on the lips also; if the well-spring of Heavenly love be deep within, it will be found springing up in the life, refreshing all who come within its reach. There will not be the exclusive choice of those who please the fancy best; receiving freely, it can freely give,³ rejoicing in any opportunity of adding to another's comfort, of doing good to any. There will be a wakeful, watchful care for others; and especially for those who are most de-

¹ 1 John, iv. 11.² 1 John, iv. 16.³ Matt. x. 8.

pendent on it. To bear the image of Jesus, is to bear the image of Him who said, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."¹ "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."² Our natural life manifests itself in every action, in every movement. So will it be with our renewed and Heavenly life; it will not be confined to this or that service, this or that channel, but according to its vigour it will diffuse itself throughout our whole being, vivifying and warming it all with the Life and Love which dwell within. Thus is the command of Christ fulfilled, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."³

Jesus spoke from His Cross to the disciple whom He loved, and said, "Behold *thy mother*!" And He would bind you so closely to Himself, as to account all those whom He regards as His mother, sister, or brother, as filling the same relation to you also—yours because they are His. Such honour have all His saints! David inquired, "Are there any here of the house of Saul, that I may show them kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Will you not much more anxiously inquire, "Are there any here of the household of God, to whom I may show kindness for His beloved Son's sake?" "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

¹ Mark, x. 44, 45.

² John, xiii. 15.

³ Matt. v. 16.

There are many on earth now, standing in this near relation to the Lord, whose souls are pierced with sorrow, want, and suffering. Many who can attach no meaning to the word *home*, beyond that of a little place of quiet, all their own, whose bare walls shut out the busy and indifferent world. Will you not try to teach them that *home* means something more than this; that *home* shall be to them a place of warmth by day, and warm rest by night; that your care and love shall help to spread the board, that the spirit may be cheered and the wasting frame refreshed and invigorated? They prize their home, however bare and empty, for it leaves them free. There they can hold communion with their God. In its quiet they can hear His "still small voice;" and in its solitude they can speak, and look up, to Him. It may be they have lived long alone, and now, in life's decline, the noisy company of parish dependants would break their spirit's quiet. They will soon be beyond our reach. Shall we not try to smooth and cheer the rough and weary way to their tired feet? We cannot deny ourselves for another's sake in heaven; this privilege, this test of love, is peculiar to earth. May the lips of Truth bear witness of *you*, "She hath done what she could."¹ It is only for a little while that the Lord intrusts His jewels² to His people's love and care. He will soon gather them to Himself. "While we

¹ Mark, xiv. 8.² Mal. iii. 17.

have time and opportunity, therefore, let us do good unto all men ; but especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”¹

Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary Magdalene.—John, xix. 25.

Mary Magdalene stood by the Cross ; watching the closing hours of the dreadful conflict between the strong man armed, who so lately held possession of her soul,² and this her Deliverer and Lord ; witnessing the death that purchased her immortal life ; but as yet understanding little of all that was passing there, all that was involved in her Redeemer’s obedience unto death.³ She knew that He had set her free from the chains of sin, with which she had been tied and bound, and that now by wicked hands He was crucified and slain ; but she knew not then that the blood which she beheld falling to the earth was the price of her pardon, the fountain in which alone her guilt could be cleansed.

The very name of Mary Magdalene has become an illustration of the words of the Lord Jesus—“ Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much.”⁴ Wherever on Mount Calvary we trace the steps by which the Redeemer passed through the grave and gate of death, there we find Mary Magdalene. When terror, danger, and death, were

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

² Luke, xi. 21, 22. Mark, xvi. 9.

³ Philip. ii. 8.

⁴ Luke, vii. 47.

around her, and fearful signs were passing in earth and heaven, Mary Magdalene stood immovable, a watcher *by the Cross*. When suffering had ceased, and death had stilled all anguish, she did not leave, but waited that she might behold *where they laid Him*.¹ Not even then did she depart, for “there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, *sitting over against the sepulchre*.”² When the strict observance of the Jewish Sabbath compelled her absence, still her heart was there, for we find her coming back to the tomb *before the morning dawned, on the first day of the week*.³ The Lord had said, “I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me,”⁴—it was to *Mary Magdalene* the risen Saviour first manifested Himself.⁵ To her was given His first commission.⁶ She out of whom had been cast seven devils, is known, wherever the Gospel is preached, as the first of all the human race who was employed by the King of Glory, after He had been declared the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.⁷ Jesus said unto her, “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”⁸

We do not need the stains of open transgression to enable us to take our place among the number of

¹ Mark, xv. 47.

² Matt. xxvii. 61.

³ John, xx. 1.

⁴ Prov. viii. 17.

⁵ Mark, xvi. 9.

⁶ John, xx. 17.

⁷ Rom. i. 4.

⁸ John, xx. 17.

those whose love is strong, because their sense of forgiveness is deep. We only need to be more in heart with Jesus. The more fully His holy light falls on us, the more clearly shall we discern the sin that dwells within us, defiling even our holy things.¹ If we live only in the outskirts of the light of the Lord, we may perceive that we are sinners, and we may be enabled to look to the Lord Jesus as the Saviour, but we shall still transgress His holy Will in numberless points; the sense of that transgression not coming home to our hearts, because of the remaining darkness that is in us. At the same time we shall lose the deep sense of the depth of God's forgiving love. The love of God is unchangeably the same in itself, but not the same in our apprehension and enjoyment of it. It gives itself according to our hunger and our thirst²—"My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord."³ It is the Holy Spirit's gracious work to convince of Sin, and to manifest Christ.⁴ If we desire a deeper sense of Sin and its forgiveness, we must seek it in a closer walk with Jesus. As His Light brightens upon us we shall see more of what the evil of Sin is, and more of its secret mingling with all our life—our pride, our self-will, our unbelief, our want of love, our want of truth, our want of holiness, our forgetfulness of God, our exaltation of self: the

¹ Exod. xxviii. 38.² Matt. v. 6.³ Jer. xxxi. 14.⁴ John, xvi. 8-14.

more we dwell with Jesus, the more shall we discern all that in us is unlike Him; and the deeper will our sense become of the Love that forgiveth all our iniquities;¹ and the more earnestly shall we watch and pray against our secret faults.² It was when Isaiah *saw* the King, the Lord of Hosts, that the sense of Sin pressed on his soul, and found expression from his lips. "Woe is me! because I am a man of unclean lips." Yet, who would not welcome such sanctification as was the holy prophet's then! This sense of Sin was followed by the application of the atonement, the live coal from the altar was laid upon his lips; "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sins purged."³ There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil. But when God revealed Himself more clearly unto Job, his former knowledge seemed but as distant acquaintance, and he said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye *seeth* Thee: *wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"⁴

The Son of God had loosed the bands of Sin with which this captive of Satan had been bound. The Son had made her free, and she was free indeed.⁵ And she manifested her freedom by her

¹ Ps. ciii. 3.² Ps. xix. 12.³ Isa. vi. 6.⁴ Job, i. 1; xlii. 5, 6.⁵ John, viii. 36.

entire devotion to the Lord. Her heart was free from the fetters which had bound it to evil; and had found instead the constraining influence of the love of Christ. We may call ourselves free, but have we the same blessed evidences of our freedom? Shame, and reproach, and danger, could not keep Mary Magdalene from the Cross. The darkness of the night could not keep her from seeking Christ. She sought Him where she saw Him laid, in the silent tomb. Would she have sought Him less earnestly if she had known that He was risen, and waiting to receive and bless her? We know that Christ is risen, and that He is exalted that He may have mercy¹ upon all who seek for Him. Whatever sin you have, He is risen to blot it out, to take it all away. Whatever want you have, He is risen to supply all your need. Whatever sorrow, He is risen to comfort you. Whatever difficulty, He is risen to guide you. He is risen to receive, to forgive, to sanctify, to sustain, and to bless you in all things. If the fetter of fear, or shame, or unbelief, has power still to keep you from the Cross of the Lord Jesus, from openly confessing Him before men, oh, seek a truer knowledge of Him by a closer walk with Him; then His Love will most surely weaken and dissolve every earthly fetter, becoming itself the constraining principle of your life,² and your exceeding great reward!³ Nothing will in-

¹ Isa. xxx. 18.² 2 Cor. v. 14.³ Gen. xv. 1.

crease our knowledge of God, or deepen our love to Him, like constant recourse to Him. And nothing will win from Him the manifestation of His love, like the obedience of faith. Every act of disobedience is a step away from God, a step which nothing but the Blood, and the Spirit, and the Righteousness, and the Intercession of the Lord Jesus, can hinder from proving our final ruin.

We learn from Mary Magdalene, that the deepest sense of Sin, if it be accompanied by faith in Jesus, will not engender a slavish fear or despondency, but will only deepen love and increase the fruits of love. We also learn, that when we have lost the sense of Christ's presence, we are not to dwell in useless regret, but to seek Him with all diligence.¹ It may seem to us as if our hope and comfort were dead and buried; but if we seek Jesus crucified,² He will at length as surely manifest Himself to us as He did to Mary Magdalene. We also learn, that if we have indeed found a risen Saviour, it will be evidenced in the life of our obedience, our desire to obey His every command, and not least His first command—that having seen Him ourselves, we bear witness to others, comforting them with the truth in which our own heart rejoices.³ This is the peculiar privilege of those who see most of Christ, that they are able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God.⁴ We cannot hear

¹ Jer. xxix. 13. ² Matt. xxviii. 5. ³ John, xx. 17. ⁴ 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

of Mary Magdalene but directly we think of Jesus, and see her in connexion with the Lord, so completely did all Darkness pass away, and the true Light shine upon her. If your love becomes strong as hers, you will be for ever no less inseparably associated with Jesus—Jesus the Mighty God, the everlasting Father,¹ the Author and Giver of all good,² the Fountain of all blessing.³ We see in Mary Magdalene, that no depth of sin and misery is below the reach of His arm;⁴ no chains too many or too strong for His hand to break.⁵ Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, He brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.⁶ He taketh the beggar from the dust, that He may cause him to inherit the throne of glory.⁷

And the mother of Zebedee's children.—

Matt. xxvii. 56.

Not long before we read that the mother of Zebedee's children came to the Lord, beseeching Him that her two sons might sit, one on His right hand, and one on His left, in His kingdom. She thought of the Glory of the Lord; and He set before her His bitter cup. "Ye know not what ye ask: Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and

¹ Isa. ix. 6. ² Jam. i. 17. ³ 1 Chron. xvii. 27. ⁴ Isa. lix. 1.

⁵ Isa. lxi. 1. ⁶ Ps. cvii. 10-14. ⁷ 1 Sam. ii. 8.

to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of My Father.”¹ Now that the Son of God was indeed bathed in His baptism of blood, and drinking the cup of bitterness, the mother of Zebedee’s children stood watching the awful scene; beholding her son, the beloved disciple, one of those for whom she had desired so much, standing, not, as it seemed to her, on the right hand of a King, but close beside the accursed Cross, with shame, and danger, and death around him; only waiting till all was over, to turn away lonely and desolate, back into a world from which every golden hope had faded, and the very form they loved and had forsaken all to follow, laid helpless in death, beneath the sentence which the malice and power of men had inflicted. One thing remained, and only one, of all that once had been so full of promise—the root of Heavenly love within their hearts. They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher sent from God: they had received Him as such, followed Him as such, loved Him as such; and though every blossom of hope, every leaf and branch, and the very rod of Jesse’s stem,² lay withered and dead before them, its *root* within their hearts was

¹ Matt. xx. 20–23.² Isa. xi. 1.

living still. Love, strong as death,¹ drew and bound them to the scene of sorrow—the beloved disciple close to his Master's side, his mother beholding afar off.

“I will bring the blind by a way that they know not.”² Isaac, the typical child, may be laid upon the altar; and Jesus, the great antitype, upon the cross: but both shall again blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit!³ That Cross on Calvary has already had a glory and a dominion which no earthly throne ever knew; every age and every land have looked upon its willing subjects: and it will be exalted until all rule, and all authority and power, are subdued before it.⁴ Wherever that Cross is revealed, the son of Zebedee is seen beside it, and his mother keeping watch afar off. If we would know what the Lord has done for those whose love continued true under the severest test, we must enter Heaven, to learn how truly He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that our highest hope on earth can reach, our fullest anticipations realise.⁵

This history may shed a blessed light over your future path, if you keep it in memory, and walk in its light. Is it not the desire of your heart to dwell with Christ in Glory? You know that the kingdom of Him, to whom all power is given,⁶ must

¹ Song of Sol. viii. 6.

² Isa. xlii. 16.

³ Isa. xxvii. 6.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

⁵ Eph. iii. 20.

⁶ Matt. xxviii. 18.

be one of perfect blessedness, and therefore it is your prayer to enter there. Perhaps it is the most earnest desire of those who love you. They look upon you now entering life with all its uncertainties before you; they know not what may be your portion here; but this they know, that your present life is a passing one, and their prayer for you is that you may have an eternal home in Heaven. If therefore you are led to the Cross you will not wonder: and let not those who love you wonder at it. Neither will you expect that Cross to be anything in which you can take pride. It was shame in the eyes of men when the beloved disciple stood beside it: it was grief and bitterness, and anguish of heart, to him. Every child of God will find the Cross of Jesus to be the same now that it was then—painful and humbling to flesh and blood. If you are seeking to follow Jesus and trial meets you in the way; trial not of your own creating but of God's appointing, the result or permission of His Will; you will not wonder at it, nor ask, "Where am I?" You will say, "This is the cross to which my Saviour calls me. I have asked to be with Him in His kingdom, and this is the needful discipline which is to humble and purify and prepare me for it!" Jesus, though a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered;¹ and if He who was sinless learned in the school of suffering, how much more is it necessary

¹ Heb. v. 8.

for us, whose wills are unsubdued, our nature earthly, our affections unsanctified ! The infinite suffering which *purchased* man's redemption, Jesus bore for His people ; their only part in this is its blessed fruit—eternal Life ; but the suffering of *discipline* they must bear, to purify them from the dross of this world, that the trial of their faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.¹

When the beloved disciple stood by the Cross, it was love alone which bound him there ; for faith and hope seem to have died with Jesus.² But you will have the light which a *risen* Saviour sheds upon that Cross. You will see and know that the Cross is not the end of all. You can look beyond it, to an open grave,³ and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.⁴ You can understand the meaning of the words of Jesus, in this sense also—“ What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”⁵ You may, like the beloved disciple, follow Jesus year after year without any trial beyond the daily disturbances to which the lives of all are subject. But when trial really comes, as it surely will if your life be lengthened and if you are led by Jesus to His Kingdom ; then remember the Cross, and keep

¹ 1 Pet. i. 7.² Luke, xxiv. 21.³ Matt. xxviii. 1-6.⁴ 1 Pet. v. 4.⁵ John, xiii. 7.

close to Him who bore its keenest anguish that your portion in it might be one of healing and not of death.

Many suffer trial who never bear the Cross of Jesus. If ours be the Cross of Christ, we shall seek Him under it—His Strength to sustain, His grace to sanctify, His Love to bless. It will be made manifest also in its effects—the subduing our will to the Will of God, the humbling of our pride, and the increasing devotion of our hearts and lives to the service of God. But you need not wait for some great trial in order to find the Cross of Jesus. Every trifling disappointment and vexation may exercise the same influence in measure over you, if you only look to Christ under them. He can teach you to profit under the least as well as under the severest discipline. Everything in which you abide with Christ and look to Him, will, by an absolute necessity, be constrained to work for your good. If you have learned to look to the Cross of the Lord Jesus as your only hope of Heaven, the atonement for your guilt, the price of your redemption, then you will not turn away from it when you are called to receive it, not only as the atonement for your Sin, but as the means of subduing sin in you. If you desire to know it only in its atonement, and not in its discipline, then it will prove that it is the punishment, and not the presence of Sin, which you desire to escape from. There is no Cross in Heaven. You

cannot stand by the Cross of the Lord Jesus there, except in the remembrance of ever-deepening love. All the training and discipline of your spirit, no less than all the atonement for your Sin, must be on earth. Do not then miss one, even the least lesson, which that Cross can teach you here. All the roughnesses of life will be kindly and thankfully met by you, if you thus think of them. You will use them as the divinely-appointed means for teaching you to subdue your will to God, for humbling your pride, for the exercise and increase of every Heavenly grace, and by this means for the glory of God in you, and the conforming you to the image of Jesus. Nothing, like this daily training, can prepare you to meet the heavier trials of life. If in every lesser trial you have still endeavoured to look to Jesus, and to meet it in His strength, the way to Him will be familiar, when your heart may be faint, and your eyes dim with sorrow. Having gathered the blessing of every lesser trial, you will be the better enabled to reap the largest measure of profit and blessing from the greater.

Your expectations from Christ cannot be too high, so long as they are true to His own word. In the world ye shall have tribulation. In Jesus, peace.¹ It is a Cross on earth, a Crown in Heaven. If we are looking to the honour to be won in following Him, Christ will teach us that it is *Himself* we

¹ John, xvi. 33.

need, His Cross, His death, that we by them may learn to know ourselves as the chief of sinners;¹ and to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again.²

In this world we may learn something of the blessedness, which is the eternal portion of the child of God, by an increasing acquaintance with the infinite price which was given for it, and the infinite Love which, "every moment,"³ seeks to prepare His children for it. Eternity will be ever unfolding the *fulness* of that purchased and freely-imparted glory.

And many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him.—Matt. xxvii. 55.

A few hours before, when the Lord surrendered Himself into the hands of the brutal multitude, who had come out with swords and staves, as against a thief, to take Him, He said to them, "This is your hour, and the power of Darkness." The ruler of the Darkness of this world was now putting forth all his strength, arraying himself in all his power against the Lord of Light and Life. In this final conflict on man's behalf, there was not only to gain the victory, but to endure the transgressor's punishment—to bear the whole weight of Sin;⁴ to endure the hiding of the light of God's countenance⁵—a

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

² 2 Cor. v. 15.

³ Isa. xxvii. 3.

⁴ Isa. liii. 6.

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 46.

mystery, whose depths of suffering no mortal thought can reach ; and to taste death for every man.¹ And He who stood alone to meet all the powers of Darkness, all the guilt of sinners, and all the wrath of God, was *the Son of Man*—more sensible to the touch of sorrow and of suffering than any other child of man can ever be. There was in Him no darkness of Sin to disguise the frightful form of evil in its every manifestation ; no blunted feeling, but all perfection, instant and full in its response to all that passed around it. It was this Son of Man who stood alone, on man's behalf, to undertake his cause ; knowing all things that should come upon Him²—able to number beforehand those overwhelming waves from Earth and Hell and Heaven, which must meet and overflow Him in the work He had undertaken. “ The waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing : I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.”³ It was in contemplation of this final conflict that the Lord had said, “ Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name.”⁴ He who came to save man, stood among them, by them rejected, and by them betrayed. When the Devil came to Him before, he found Him alone in the wilderness ; the wild beasts

¹ Heb. ii. 9.² John, xviii. 4.³ Ps. lxix. 1, 2.⁴ John, xii. 27, 28.

of the field honoured Him.¹ But now he finds Him in the midst of those He came to save—whose sicknesses He had healed, whose hunger He had fed, whose dead He had raised to life; yet, no voice of praise, no voice of prayer, no voice of love is raised for Him: the only cry is, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” For this He had turned from the Hallelujah of Cherubim and Seraphim—for us and for our salvation.

How green a spot amidst the waste of human hearts, which Sin had scorched and withered, is presented to the weary eye in the little band which the words of the Evangelist place before us—“*Many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him.*” They had *followed* Jesus; they had *ministered* to Him while it was possible. He had passed beyond the reach of their weakness, but they had done all they could, and now they watched in helpless grief the close of that sad scene, which must have seemed to them so strange! How little did they then understand that He whom they had ministered unto was now ministering to them the Bread of Life, the antidote for Sin, the balm of every Sorrow, the Living water which none who drink can thirst again! He had accepted their every service, dear to Him because the offering of their love. He had deigned to stoop to a condition so low as to be dependent on

¹ Isa. xliii. 20.

them for the supply of His necessities. They had smoothed, so far as it was possible for them to smooth, the path whose sharpest points their eyes could not discern. The Glory and Majesty of Him to whom they ministered were hidden from their view; but the beauties of Holiness were His, and signs of Mercy, wonders of Love, and miracles of Power, all proved Him to be the Son of God. They could not avert the malice of wicked men. He was the Shepherd¹ of the sheep whose life was to be taken from the earth;² and they could only follow Him, and minister unto Him so far as permitted; and then behold, and wonder, and lament. But, *now*, their eyes have seen the King in His beauty; they behold the land that is very far off.³ The Lamb in the midst of the Throne feeds them, and leads them to fountains of living water; and God has wiped away all tears from their eyes.⁴

The enmity of the heart of man is not less real now, than it was then. Jesus is still rejected, and denied. The Apostle speaks of Him as crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.⁵ The Jews denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. And every one, to whom the sound of the Gospel has come, is making an individual choice. If Jesus be not the first desire of our hearts, then, whatever our choice

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.² John, x. 11.³ Isa. xxxiii. 17.⁴ Rev. vii. 17.⁵ Heb. vi. 6.

may be, we are, no less than the Jews, denying Christ, and desiring some other object to be granted to us. There is no neutral ground. Christ Jesus has offered Himself to every one who has heard the sound of the Gospel—if He is not received, He is rejected.¹ If you believe Him to be the Christ of God, O let it be the first object of your life to follow Him. Keeping your eye on Him, “looking unto Jesus,” let it be your constant endeavour to tread in His steps—His steps of truth and love, of faith and obedience. The path in which He walked was—the Will of God. He never departed from it in a single step; and when you make that holy Will your study, your object, your aim, then you are indeed following Jesus; and in every step, whether you can discern Him or not, He is surely before you in the way. You see how steadfast the purpose of this little company was; they followed Jesus from Galilee to Mount Calvary, as far as they could follow Him. Their own ease, their own pleasure, reproach, or danger, had no power to tempt them to turn aside from following Him. This did not arise from any superior power they possessed above others, it was because their eyes were ever towards the Lord, and therefore their heart was steadfast, and their steps held His way. “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”² The only means

¹ Matt. xii. 30.² Ps. xvi. 8.

by which to keep our heart true to the Will of God, and our feet steadfast in the way of His commandments, is to keep our eye on Jesus. How dim and imperfect was their knowledge, compared with that which we may obtain through the written Word of God, and the Holy Spirit's Light; yet faith, and love, and obedience, flowed from their knowledge; and shall we be willing that they should rise up in the judgment to condemn us? Their record is on High—may we be numbered with them!

They not only followed Jesus: they also ministered unto Him. This privilege may be no less yours, than it was theirs. There is nothing you possess with which you may not minister to Him. *We minister to the Son of God* when we are so truly His servants as that our aim in all things is to do His Will, and to please Him. Our every earthly act, from morning until night, may become a heavenly service, in which we may be found to have truly ministered to the praise and honour and glory of God. There is no limit, except the limit of God's Will: all that errs from that Will is sin, but all our life, within that safe and blessed and endless line, may attain this highest end. Your duties, your studies, your social and friendly intercourse, your recreation, no less than your separate acts of worship, may all minister to the glory of the Lord Jesus, if you look to Him in all, walk with Him in all, depend on Him in all. To those who thus

seek Him in all things, He will be ever revealing fresh opportunities for glorifying Him. His Blessing falling on hours or moments, on words or acts, can cause the return of a hundredfold. He is not less present with His people because His human form has passed into the Heavens. He has taught us to pray that His Kingdom may come; and His will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Our every effort to enlarge and strengthen that Kingdom, in the world, in our own hearts, and in the hearts of others; every effort to obey His Will, and to lead others to know and love it also, is *ministering to Christ*. He has entered into His Glory now, but He has left a suffering people as His representatives on earth. Every want which you relieve for them, every burthen which you lighten, every sorrow which you cheer by word or act, He accounts as done unto Himself. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My Brethren, ye have done it unto Me."¹

Those who followed the Lord and ministered unto Him then, stood on Calvary looking upon His death. And in this they are our guides, no less than in their former acts. We know what *Calvary* is, better than those who stood there; and shall not we be often there, beholding the Son of God? No-where but on *Calvary* can we find the atonement for

¹ Matt. xxv. 40.

all our wandering steps, for all our cold neglect, our wilful disregard of Christ. There we may find, ever in its freshness and its fulness, the Love that can forgive, the Fountain that can cleanse, and the Grace that can restore.

And with Him they crucify two thieves ; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left.—Mark, xv. 27.

Both these dying malefactors appear to have entertained the same feeling of enmity against the Son of God, and to have expressed that feeling by railing on Him.¹ Both were in the same condition—under the darkness of Sin, and the sentence of Death. But one is taken, and the other left. The Love of God is not less Omnipotent than His Power. Peter, in the midst of cursing and swearing, was melted into repentance and tears by a *look*. Saul, breathing out threatening and slaughter, was arrested by a Light from Heaven, and under the gentlest expostulation ever breathed in words, was won to the devoted service of Him whom before he had laboured only to persecute and blaspheme. In the case of the dying malefactor, we are not told the form in which the Love of God fell on his spirit, melting the chains of Sin, and setting it free. But though we may not trace its course, we perceive by its instant effect, that Heavenly Love, in these last

¹ Matt. xxvii. 44.

moments of earthly life, glowed in the soul of the dying sinner. The Darkness of Sin passes away; unbelief vanishes, like a cloud, before the Light of Truth; and the Lord alone is exalted by him. With the heart he believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he makes confession to Salvation.¹ In him we see the work of God displayed in its greatness, and its simplicity—"This is the work of God, that ye believe 'on Him whom He hath sent."² The faith of the dying man had not one earthly aid to strengthen it. The disciples had been told beforehand, by the Lord Himself, of all things that should come upon Him, and that He would rise from the dead on the third day³—Yet all but the beloved disciple had fled, in unbelief, disappointment, and fear. The dying thief had listened to no such assurances. He meets the Man Christ Jesus as his companion in misery. Not a single voice in all the world around, bore witness to the Son of God. He saw Him at his side, denied, rejected, crucified. Yet with an overcoming faith, a faith which triumphed over every conceivable obstacle, he confesses Christ before men; and then, looking above all his own vileness, and all the suffering, weakness, and dishonour, under which he saw the Son of Man expiring, he breathes forth his soul in prayer—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Words so simple that they

¹ Rom. x. 10.² John, vi. 29.³ Mark, viii. 31.

might have been the utterance of a child ; and yet, in the circumstances under which they were uttered, involving a faith, which, the more we contemplate it, the more we must wonder at, and trace its Heavenly origin. But it met, as faith in Jesus ever does, its overflowing return ; “ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

What was it that at once, in a moment of time, changed the hardened criminal into a self-accusing penitent, a preacher of Righteousness, and an undoubting believer ? It was a sight of Christ. His soul was dark before, as the darkened hearts of the multitude who were instant with loud voices requiring the death of Jesus. But Jesus, even in His own death, stretched forth the hand of His redeeming love, and drew this brand from the burning. He poured into his heart the Light of His Spirit, enlightening the eyes of his understanding, enabling him to see in Him crucified the Son of God, the Saviour of Sinners, the Lord of Life. He saw Christ Jesus in that awful moment, as the precious Corner-Stone, rejected of men, but which God has laid for a foundation ; and instantly, without delay, he raised his faith, and hope, and love, upon Him, and lo ! Sin, and Death, and Hell, could not remove or touch them ; there they abide, a monument for ever of his eternal happiness, and God’s eternal praise. Thus, in the hour of human weakness, did the Son

of God most strikingly display His eternal Power and Godhead ; unseen, unheard, invisibly to the eye of sense—He seemed only to answer a petition. But His own Sovereign Grace, from first to last, had wrought the whole work in that new-created soul—as gently done as nature's agonies were violent. "He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory."¹

This sight of Jesus is not always given with equal clearness. In some there exists for a long period a desire, rather than a realised view. "*We would see Jesus,*" is all that they can say. But though they may not distinctly behold Him, the unceasing and increasing desire proves that He looks on them in Love, that He has said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him."² It proves that the Light and Love of the Spirit of God are already enabling the soul to desire the Object, in which no beauty was once seen. They may not be able to behold the Light of His countenance ; nor to meet a personal assurance that their sins are forgiven, and that they shall be with Him in His Kingdom ; but they look upon Him in the record of His Word, they trace His person, His character, His offices there, and they seek Him in earnest prayer, believing

¹ Matt. xii. 19, 20.

² Isa. lvii. 18.

that more than words can express is to be found in Him. And the day will come, when those who seek Christ in everything, will behold Him in everything. When His own voice shall answer them—"Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee."¹ Then every word of Scripture, every event in life, every moment's portion, is no longer regarded as the distant manifestation of His Will, but seen as the gift and appointment of His Love, the sign of His presence, the means of glorifying Him, and of attaining a closer union with Him. His voice has fixed the seal of blessedness upon the former, as well as the latter state—"Blessed are they which do *hunger and thirst* after Righteousness : for they shall be filled."²

Jesus had said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."³ And the dying thief found it indeed true. But He also says, "I am the Way."⁴ To the dying malefactor, already on the Cross, a few hours measured out the whole length of this life's remaining way : but before *you*, it lengthens into an uncertain future. Oh, let not this poor dying malefactor be found, under circumstances so adverse to his faith, to have made Christ every step of his remaining way, and you to have neglected this ! Whatever Heavenly Blessings you desire, whether Faith, Love, Truth, Joy, Peace, they are the gift of God,

¹ John, ix. 37. ² Matt. v. 6. ³ John, xi. 25. ⁴ John, xiv. 6.

only in and by Christ Jesus ; you must seek them in and from Him, or you can never truly find them ;¹ you may seem to possess them, but if they have not their root in Jesus, they will wither and die, when you most need their comfort. Whatever practical Grace you desire, to enable you to walk according to the Will of God, and to glorify Him, whether Diligence, Perseverance, Meekness, Gentleness, Long-suffering, Brotherly Kindness, Charity, these are the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, and they can never be truly engrafted in you, except you are engrafted in Jesus.² Do you say that you would have continual recourse to Christ, and keep Him in sight, but that you cannot ? You cannot at once, nor perhaps ever, without interruption in this life : but you must remember that it is a Heavenly *habit*, to be strengthened by continual recollection of mind, and watchfulness. His Word, and the Light of His Spirit, are the means, by the continual use of which, that mental vision, whereby He is beheld, will become so cleansed and purged, that you will be enabled to recognise Him, in all places, at all times, and in all events.

This brief history is a ray of infinite Love, falling from the Cross of the Son of God upon our Prisons, our Convict Ships, our Penal Settlements. Through eighteen centuries it has streamed from Calvary on every guilty soul, whether convicted by God alone,

¹ Eph. i. 22, 23. John, xvi. 23, 24.

² John, xv. 4-6.

or tried and condemned at the bar of man. No power in 'Earth or Hell can avert its Heavenly, its Almighty call. It still proclaims as forcibly as ever, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved,"¹—as freshly as when the dying thief first lifted his eyes, from which the light of earthly life was fading, and fixed their last, their believing look, upon the Son of God. Many will turn from the Heavenly call in obstinate rejection, many in careless neglect, and many, alas ! in wilful ignorance : but the Word of God cannot return unto Him void ;² and the day when all secret things shall be brought to light,³ can alone reveal the trophies which this Heavenly call has won from the gates of eternal Death. The children whom you have taught in the Sabbath or week-day school, or for whom your thoughtful care has provided the means of instruction, having learned in their childhood the thrilling history of the dying thief—if any such should break away from the bond of truth and love, and wear the chain, or incur the guilt, of their country's broken laws, may look back on Calvary, and believe, and live. Or the poor criminal, trained in ignorance and evil, and now shut in by the mountains of guilt and condemnation, may be permitted to see the feet of some blessed messenger, coming to tell him, for the first time, in Calvary's surpassing story, that GOD IS LOVE.⁴

We may not have incurred the sentence of man's

¹ Isa. xiv. 22. ² Isa. lv. 11. ³ Luke, viii. 17. ⁴ Isa. lii. 7.

broken law, and yet we may gain so clear a Light, revealing the Holiness of God, and our want of conformity to His Will, as may enable us with truth to confess ourselves the chief of sinners.¹ We shall see that we have robbed God of His Glory—by exalting ourselves against His Will, and putting the creature in His place. We have robbed Christ of His Glory—by trusting to our own works, and our own efforts, for justification in the sight of God.—All such, the Truth declares to be thieves and robbers.² We have robbed the Holy Spirit of His Glory—by not believing our dependence upon Him for Divine illumination, and therefore refusing to seek His gracious influences. We may take our place beside the dying thief, only feeling our sins to be of deeper dye—“Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee!” and these sins cherished in the midst of the Light of a Day, which he never knew. When we thus take our place in Calvary, how precious becomes the record of all that passed between the sinner and the Saviour. We find more words recorded as having been spoken there, by the Lord of Earth and Heaven, to that poor malefactor, than even to the beloved disciple; he needed more, to assure his heart of the same Love, the same Heaven,—and they were given. We find no word of upbraiding, no mention made of transgression; the Cross of the Son of God and the conscience of the

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.² John, x. 8.

awakened sinner bore witness to the guilt of sin, the lips of the dying Redeemer utter only the assurance of love and welcome. — “ Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” And He is Jesus, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.¹ Truly Calvary may overcome every doubt of the freeness of Heavenly forgiveness, the fulness of Heavenly Love. Let it also strengthen your faith and hope, your prayers and efforts, for all who are afar off, by manifesting to you how quickly the Lord can bring them near to Himself, by the blood of His Cross.²

Now when the Centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.—Matt. xxvii. 54.

The presence of heathen soldiers at the Cross of Jesus arises so naturally out of the circumstances of the event, that there might be a fear of passing over the fact, without regarding in it the Will of God, which governed those circumstances. But “ whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”³ Pilate said to the Jews, “ Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law.” They replied, “ It is not lawful for us to put any man to

¹ Heb. xiii. 8.

² Eph. iii. 13.

³ Ps. cvii. 43.

death.”¹ Proving by their own confession that the Sceptre had departed from Judah, and therefore that Shiloh was come.² Pilate, the Roman Governor, then passed sentence upon Jesus; that sentence was the Roman punishment of crucifixion; and Roman soldiers were appointed to execute the sentence. The will of man accomplished that which the Love of God had willed. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath Thou shalt restrain.”³ Jesus was lifted up to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the Glory of His people Israel.⁴ The confession of the redeemed malefactor, giving glory to the crucified Jesus, had scarcely died away from Calvary, when the heart’s adoration rises again, from the lips of those who have been His executioners. At His birth Gentile Sages came from far, to lay their offerings at His feet, and to worship Him as Israel’s promised King; and at His death, Gentile voices confess Him to be the Son of God. “Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out.”⁵ — “Not able to enter in because of unbelief.”⁶

The heathen soldiers confess Him to be the Son of God, whom their Governor has condemned to the death of the lowest ignominy, and whom their own

¹ John, xviii. 31, 32. ² Gen. xlix. 10. ³ Ps. lxxvi. 10.

⁴ Luke, ii. 32.

⁵ Matt. viii. 11.

⁶ Heb. iii. 19; iv. 1.

hands have crucified and slain. — While Jewish Priests and People, whose were the Law and the Prophets, foretelling all that had come to pass, look on unmoved, and only take counsel to complete that which their malice has so far accomplished.¹ What was it which made them to differ? A sight of Christ in the Light of Truth given to the one, while the veil of unbelief still darkened the other. Wherever this Divine Light is given, the eyes of the understanding are enlightened by it, and then a single sight of Jesus is enough to convince and win the heart. The Jews had witnessed the multiplied wonders, not only of His Power, but His Love; every past and present proof of Divine authority was theirs. The Roman soldiers only saw His Death. Yet the one became more hardened than before; the other confess Him to be the Son of God. The same is witnessed in the present day. There are those who have heard from their childhood of Jesus Christ; whose lips have read His Truth, and whose ears have heard His Holy Will, yet they go on frowardly in the way of their own hearts, they refuse to return. They see no beauty in Christ that they should desire Him; while many a poor outcast heathen hears for the first time of Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners, and believes to the salvation of his soul. When one who has long heard of Jesus, and turned a deaf ear, or

¹ Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

listened in cold indifference, — when, by the Grace of God, such a one is quickened to a new and Heavenly Life, you will generally find that it was not by any comprehensive view of all he had heard of Jesus, but a single sentence of His Word, or a single sight of Him as the Son of God in Truth and Love, which turned him from darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God. One ray of Heavenly Light, one word of Heavenly Truth, entering into the heart, is sufficient to convince and convert it. While without this entrance to the heart, all the evidence that can be given may pass before the mind, and leave the soul still in the darkness of Sin, and the indifference of unbelief. “O send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead me.”¹

A general knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, is most important and necessary to the right building up and carrying out of a Christian's faith and practice. It is often from the want of this general knowledge that words are taken, separated from their connexion and their bearing, and made the props of error, instead of the pillars of Truth. But however necessary this general knowledge of the Truth of Scripture may be to the correctness of the form of godliness, it is the reception of the Truth by the heart which vivifies that form. In reading or hearing, the question of deepest moment is not, What general knowledge have I gained

¹ Ps. xliii. 3.

of the Truth of God? but, What has my heart received? It must be our object not merely to look upon, but to drink in, the Truth, — to live in it while it is before us, that we may live by it when called to other objects. As it regards others, we may mourn over the general ignorance we find, and rightly long and labour to remove it — But we may also remember for our comfort, that any one sound of the Truth *may* be made a quickening call, by the Power and Grace of God. Whenever permitted to bring Heavenly Truth before the minds of others; let the earnest desire of our hearts be, not so much the amount of knowledge we hope to impart, as the sowing of some precious seed of Truth in their hearts. It may be a sentence of the Holy Word not especially marked by us, we know not which, we know not when, but the privilege is ours to sow the seed, and to look to God to bless the springing thereof. “The entrance of Thy words giveth Light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”¹ One of the beautiful evidences of the Divine original of the Holy Scriptures beams upon the observer’s eye in intercourse with the Poor. They may not attain to any general knowledge, but every separate word reaches their hearts in the harmony of Truth. I have heard the most singular interpretation, and application, of points of *fact*; and in those who could but barely spell out a knowledge of the sacred

¹ Ps. cxix. 130.

page in their own dwellings, or learn it by word of mouth from others, the most complete alteration of words, and not seldom of the sense also, but the *Truth* still unchanged, unperverted. They are often ready to maintain an error when they have been taught it from man, but I never met an instance in which a perverted view of Truth was taken by them when gathering it for themselves from the Word of God. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."¹

A sight of Jesus in the Light of Truth, will in a moment change the rebel and the alien into the child. "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy Name."² But we see that all are not Israel who are of Israel.³ That it is not outward privileges, but inward grace, which can alone make our calling and election sure.⁴ During the Redeemer's life on earth we see the strongest instances of faith, in those whose privileges had been few compared with the nominal Israel. The faith which Jesus marvelled at, because it would not turn from Him until its suit was granted, notwithstanding all adverse appearances, was in a woman of Ca-

¹ Luke, x. 21. ² Isa. xxvi. 13. ³ Rom. ix. 6. ⁴ 2 Pet. i. 10.

naan.¹ It was a Roman Centurion on whom the Lord's commendation fell—"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."² And at the death of Jesus, a condemned criminal, and heathen soldiers, confessed Him before Earth and Heaven, when doubt and fear had sealed the lips of those who had long known and followed Him. "There are last, which shall be first, and first which shall be last."³ We have need to be earnest and watchful in the use of every means of grace, from the blessing asked at our tables, to the public worship of God, lest we should be found to have been lukewarm in the midst of privileges; while faith and love have glowed in those who possessed but few, compared with ours, but who made an earnest and watchful use of all they possessed.

It was the malice of wicked men—Rulers, Priests, and People, which, by demanding the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, compelled the presence of the heathen soldiers on Mount Calvary. Shall our *love* be willing to accomplish less than Jewish *hatred* accomplished? We know that the Son of God, lifted up on Calvary, was Abraham's promised seed, in Whom all nations of the Earth are to be blessed,⁴—"The Root of Jesse," of whom Isaiah prophesied: "He shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek."⁵ "Faith cometh by hearing, and

¹ Matt. xv. 21-28.

² Luke, vii. 2-10.

³ Luke, xiii. 30.

⁴ Gen. xii. 3.

⁵ Isa. xi. 10.

hearing by the Word of God. But how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"¹ Is it our effort to bring the heathen to the Cross of the Son of God? His Power converted those who had executed the sentence of death, into the confessors of Him whom they had crucified. The prayer of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," returns with instant answer. They were the first-fruits of the death of Christ, springing up around the Cross. A guard of honour there. Will the Lord show Himself less strong on the behalf of those, whom our prayers and efforts may bring within sight of the Cross? It is not the beloved missionary alone whom the heathen will rise up to call blessed; but those, with him, whose love has sent him forth, and whose prayers have strengthened his hands in God. May our lives proclaim, as distinctly as the Roman soldiers' lips, that we believe Jesus crucified to be the Son of God, by the obedience which we endeavour to render to all His commandments; and then His last command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,"² will not be left as a forgotten or disregarded injunction.—That the blessing of Abraham may come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.³—While our prayers are offered up, that on the heathen also may be poured out the gift of the

¹ Rom. x. 12-17.² Mark, xvi. 15.³ Gal. iii. 14.

Holy Ghost.¹—That the heathen may become Christ's Inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the Earth His possession.²—That men may be blessed in Him; that all nations may call Him blessed. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious Name for ever. And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."³

There came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.—John, xix. 39.

Nicodemus came first to the Lord Jesus, under the cover of night. We afterwards hear a public remonstrance from his lips, bearing witness that the embers of faith and love were burning within, rising at that moment in a kindling flame; and proving, in the effect they produced, how the weakest word spoken for Christ, if spoken in sincerity and truth, shall not be in vain. But we never hear of his openly confessing Christ during the Redeemer's life on earth. What the influences were which struggled with the Light within, we are not told. It might be the fear of man, which bringeth a snare.⁴ It might be a divided heart, which had not yet learned to be willing to suffer the loss of all to win Christ.⁵

¹ Acts, x. 45.

² Ps. ii. 8.

³ Ps. lxxii. 17-19.

⁴ Prov. xxix. 25.

⁵ Philip. iii. 8.

But the death of Jesus perfected the work which His life had begun. The Cross, the death of Jesus, won the heart which had still held back its devotion, though witnessing His miracles of Power and Love. Nicodemus had suffered the Son of God to live on earth without the ministering service he might have rendered; but now, in death, when love can only gratify itself by its attendance, he comes forward to wait upon and minister to the lifeless form. The ignominious death of the Lord Jesus filled the heart of Nicodemus—for he had from the first felt the assurance that God was with Him, and the long-pent-up stream of feeling within him overflowed. It is not night now, but Nicodemus is bending over the crucified Son of Man. It is no gentle remonstrance to perverted power which he offers now, then to retire;—no, man has done his worst, He to whom all power was given can do no more mighty works. His lips, sealed in death, cannot even say to enemies and persecutors—“If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way,”¹ yet Nicodemus stands exposed upon Calvary to the view and inquiry of all; he does not send another, he comes himself, openly, in the face of day, of reproach, of danger, to perform the last offices that can be rendered to the lifeless form of one honoured and beloved. It was the act of an overflowing love. *Reason* might have said, ‘If Divine, why did He die? If sent of God, why this

¹ John, xviii. 8.

universal reproach and reviling? Why venture that for the dead, which you withheld from the living? Your services might have strengthened and cheered them, they are useless now, and will only provoke those whose rage is maddened to its height, endangering you, while they cannot now benefit Him. Not only can He not protect you in them, He cannot even know them.' But it was Heavenly love that replied in the soul of Nicodemus, 'I have sinned! I cannot follow Him now in life, but I can yet confess Him in death. It shall be known that one heart honours and reveres Him. The shame that man has put upon Him, shall be effaced by the love of man. I will take the soldiers' place; they laid on him the Cross, I will lay Him in sweet odours. I will yet venture all in His service before He is for ever hid from my sight.'

You will not enter far into life without seeing Christ dishonoured. You will see Him denied and rejected by those who prefer the world before Him. They dishonour Christ in every way. They dishonour His holy Day, dishonour His holy Word, dishonour His holy Law, dishonour His Will. The language which their daily life utters is, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And you will perhaps see him dishonoured by His own people, His own disciples: The world may be treading their Lord under its feet,¹ and they silent in His cause.

¹ Heb. x. 29.

Or you may even witness their denial of His Name, for when the disciple joins with those who break his Master's Law, he denies his own discipleship, and dishonours Christ. Christ is dishonoured by any want of love, by any want of truth, by unbelief. Disobedience to God in any form dishonours Christ, in those who bear His name, having been baptized into his death.¹ Those who bear the name of Christians, profess by that to be followers of Christ; not walking according to the course of this world,² but according to the rule of God's revealed Will.³ But there is this difference between those who truly love the Lord and those who only bear His Name. Those who truly love the Lord are sensible of and mourn for their transgressions, and the blood shed on Calvary cleanses them from all their sin. But those who are Christians in name only, so far from mourning over their multiplied transgressions, are not even conscious of them. Their hearts are so far from Jesus that His Light has never entered them. They are sensible of any departure from their own standard of right; but their darkened eyes discern not the holy Will of God in its bearing on every act, reaching even to the thoughts and intents of the heart; therefore they transgress it without knowledge, without repentance, without seeking an atonement.

When you see Christ dishonoured, think of

¹ Rom. vi. 3.

² Eph. ii. 2.

³ Gal. vi. 15, 16.

Nicodemus. Though you are young, you may perform his part. He did not go to Mount Calvary to reprove the people assembled there for dishonouring Jesus. He went there not to speak, but to act; to show by his own quiet offices of service and of love that he honoured Him whom they despised. If you would honour Jesus, you must remember His commandments *to do them*.¹ It must be your endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.² We see that it was naturally no easy thing to Nicodemus to brave reproach, and shame, and danger. And you will not find it always easy to confess your Saviour before men. It will often be far easier to your natural mind to join in that which is dishonouring to Him. There is nothing strong enough to enable you to overcome the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil, except the death of Jesus. You may love to look on Jesus in His life, to listen to His words, to see His acts of mercy; but it is to His death you must come for the influence that alone can subdue sin and self in you, and enable you to live to His praise and honour and glory. Think of Nicodemus coming to honour Jesus crucified. Think of all that he incurred the risk of by so doing, and you will be ashamed and grieved at the thought that you, who know much more than he knew of that Heavenly Teacher, should yet be found below him in your endeavours to honour Jesus. Let

¹ Ps. ciii. 18.² Tit. ii. 10.

the consciousness of your own repeated failings yet more endear, and lead you oftener to Mount Calvary, that you may there find the washing of that precious blood which can blot out all your want of love. If your study of the Word of God be not an earnest study you will be found to have dishonoured Christ through wilful ignorance. If your prayer be not earnest for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, you will be found to have dishonoured Christ from your neglect of the only means which can enable any to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.¹

Nicodemus was high in rank and learning. He was a Ruler of the Jews, and a Master in Israel. Yet he came himself to Calvary to honour the lifeless body of the Lord Jesus. The time, the cost, the service, were all rendered personally. We learn from this that the service, which the heart renders, is a *personal* service; that time, and cost, and labour, are all gladly rendered by those who know the Lord in His death. You do not need sweet spices, now, such as Nicodemus brought. The Lord is risen; and all His garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Him glad.² But there are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, who are lying dead in trespasses and sins.³ They have not yet been quickened by the Spirit of Holiness; they have not

¹ Eph. iv. 1.² Ps. xlv. 8.³ Eph. v. 30; ii. 1.

yet risen with Christ.¹ You look upon those who are spiritually dead, it may be in the circle of your own family or friends, or in the household and neighbourhood in which you dwell, and you hear of them elsewhere. Let it then be your highest honour to use for them those Heavenly spices of Truth and Love, of Faith and Prayer; and it may be that the third day they shall be raised up and live in your sight.² Then shall your joy be no less than that of Nicodemus, in the day when your risen Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.³

Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable Counsellor, which also waited for the Kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock.—Mark, xv. 43, 46.

Joseph of Arimathæa had been a disciple of Christ, but secretly for fear of the Jews.⁴ But the Lord he loved in secret was one who did not despise the day of small things.⁵ His eye can read the secrets of the heart; and can discern the grain among the chaff; the gold amidst the dross. It was the same Lord who afterwards said to the Church at

¹ Col. iii. 1.² Hos. vi. 2.³ 2 Thess. i. 10.⁴ John, xix. 38.⁵ Zech. iv. 10.

Philadelphia, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word."¹ And in the hour when the disciples were fled, when no voice of kindred or faithful follower ventured to ask the sacred form in which life had been extinguished, Joseph of Arimathæa came, and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. In His earthly life and ministry the Son of God was attended by the *poor*. A *rich* man asked Him to his table, but the discourtesy he showed proved the invitation to be no mark of love; while a poor sinful woman, even at the rich man's table, supplied his lack of service. We read also of one who came to the Lord, rich in great possessions, but he soon departed sorrowful when he found that to follow Christ was a claim superior to the retaining of his worldly wealth. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.² But in death, when suffering and reproach and ignominy had reached their height, when even those who had forsaken all to follow Christ were fled; then learning, rank, and wealth, came forward in attendance on His lifeless form. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints."³ How infinitely precious then in the sight of God must that death have been, which is the sole means

¹ Rev. iii. 8.² Jam. ii. 5.³ Ps. cxvi. 15.

whereby the execution of the sentence passed upon Sin has, in the case of every believer, become a moment on which such peculiar tenderness is bestowed, that it can be written of every one who believes in Jesus that his death is "*precious* in the sight of the Lord!" Is it not enough to have made death to be the gate of Life; must such love invest the believer in Jesus, that the moment in which the record of Sin is sealed upon his mortal frame, is the moment of his earthly life in which the tenderest love is manifested? Does not the death of Jesus in human imagery portray the death of every child of His?—No sooner had His spirit fled, than shame and suffering were gone for ever, never more to approach; and all that most could bless and honour—the heart of truest love, the dignity of rank and learning, and the hand of wealth, all wait upon Him. Did He not deign in this, to illustrate the change that one short moment will effect? The martyr from the stake, or the dungeon; the beggar from the rich man's gate; the patient sufferer from his bed of pain; passing from all the suffering and the shame that clung around them here, to the care of angels, the presence of their King, to glory, honour, and immortality.¹

Joseph of Arimathæa stood high in earthly honour, but he now ventures all for Christ. If he did not testify his love now, he never might be able to do so; the time, the opportunity, would soon be

¹ Rom. ii. 7.

gone. It was already too late to make it an act of ministry to the living ; but it was some relief to a faithful heart to risk everything to honour that lifeless form, which was all the earth retained of Him who had lived to hallow and bless it. We too must hasten our work, "the time is short."¹ The opportunity is ours now to honour Jesus, to make it manifest by our service of love that He is precious in our eyes. If we delay, it may be for ever too late. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are ;"² those who have not known Christ in His death, will not be known by Him in His Life. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."³ The Lord takes as much notice of the thoughts of our hearts, the words of our lips, and the acts of our life, as of all that passed on Calvary. Only let the root of Heavenly Love within your heart be continually watered by the living Word of God ; and let your continual prayer be for His Spirit, under whose shadow alone it can flourish ; and then you will be enabled to live for Him who died for you.

We do not need Joseph of Arimathæa's fine linen now. The blood that flowed from that sacred

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29.² Luke, xiii. 25.³ Luke, ix. 26.

form can whiten our defiled garments, so as no fuller on earth could white them. "Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple; and He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them." Our care must be to take our polluted garments to Calvary, to cleanse them there. None can serve God on earth now, or in Heaven hereafter, whose garments are not purified by the blood of Jesus. These white robes are the only apparel any servant of His can wear. Nor will He look upon, nor dwell with, any who are not so arrayed.

The sacred form, once entombed on Calvary, needs not your costly service now. The Lord has risen, and hath put on His "glorious apparel." "He is clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt with a golden girdle."¹ But you may still be a follower of Joseph of Arimathæa. Christ has entered into His Glory; but He asks your care for every friendless being, every naked soul. He be-

¹ Rev. i. 13.

stows on you fine linen, white and clean, such as no wealth could purchase. He would have the poor from the highways brought into His marriage feast, each one with a wedding garment on; and this charge He intrusts to you.¹ He would have you teach them to know the Love that waits to receive and welcome; the robe of Righteousness ready to adorn the poorest and the vilest if they will only come.—“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the Angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”²—Jesus Christ, the Angel of the Covenant,³ is rich unto all who call upon Him.⁴ Joseph of Arimathæa had received no request from His lips. He did not know Him to be conscious of His act of love, did not think that He should ever see Him on earth again: so dim was the light of faith in those whose love was yet so strong! But you have His repeated request; you know that His eye is upon all your ways; and that He will come again to prove His acceptance of all. “Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”⁵

¹ Matt. xxii. 9–13.² Zech. iii. 3, 4.³ Mal. iii. 1.⁴ Rom. x. 12.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

CHAPTER VI.

“PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”—Rom. xiii. 14.

THERE is in the Lord Jesus not only the absence of all evil; but the presence of all excellence. Nothing will stand the final test of God’s trying and purifying fire, but that which is of Jesus Christ. You may have taken Christ as the foundation of all your hopes, but if you desire that your daily work in life should abide, to the glory of God, you must be no less careful that all you do is done by faith in Christ Jesus¹—learning that entire dependence on Him which will lead you to look to, and to lean on, Him in everything. Do you feel that you desire to look up to the Lord Jesus, and walk with Him, in all things, but, that Sin so darkens your vision and weakens your strength, that you cannot? O learn from this something of what Sin must be! Sin, not as you hear of it in open ungodliness, but Sin in your own heart—that in a world on which the Light of Life is shining, and in which you are invited to look up, and behold, and walk in its

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

Light, by reason of Sin you cannot discern, you cannot obey! Will you rest within the wrapping folds of such an evil thing? Will you not cry to Him who is Mighty to save, able to deliver? But though you may not yet discern the presence of the Lord, if you are mindful of His Will in all things, you are no less surely walking with Him, than if you had the blessed sense of His presence. You are like those, whose eyes are on the heavens, watching for the morning; they will behold the very first faint streak of light which breaks across the eastern sky; they will see it brightening upon them to the perfect day.¹ Blessed are all they that wait for Him.²

The command is—Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. We must put Him on as our *Justification*; so arrayed in the Lord Jesus, His Blood, His Righteousness, that we may be seen in Him alone!”³ This is the believer’s *Justification*—that he has put on Christ. It is a positive act. Christ is the deliberate choice, appropriation, and plea of his faith.

But the *Sanctification* of the child of God is no less necessary than his *Justification*. He needs the indwelling Spirit of Christ, no less than His robe of Righteousness. God has predestinated all His chosen people to be conformed to the image of His Son.⁴ The Apostle speaks of them as having put

¹ Ps. cxxx. 5, 6.

² Isa. xxx. 18.

³ Philip. iii. 9.

⁴ Rom. viii. 29.

on the New Man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created them.¹ Whatsoever Heavenly Grace we find in the Lord Jesus, He has left us an example that we should tread in His steps. In dependence on the Holy Spirit's aid, we must seek to cultivate the same; putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, both as our Justification and our Sanctification.

We find in the Lord Jesus a perfect KNOWLEDGE of the character, the mind, and the will of God.² If we would be conformed to the image of Christ, if we would put on Christ, we must seek a daily increasing *knowledge* of God.³ This can be gained only by *communion* with Him. In reading or hearing His Word, unless we receive it as the word of a present God, speaking individually to and for us, we shall hold no communion with Him in it, we shall gain no living knowledge of Him. In prayer, unless we express the realised wants and desires of our souls to One from whom we earnestly seek and hope for their supply, our prayer will pass away as empty breath, leaving none of the blessings which result from communion with God, never to bring any returns as the evidence that He has heard and accepted it. Without *communion* with God by the aid of His Spirit—in His Word, and by prayer, all is empty of refreshment.—As those who should look

¹ Col. iii. 10.

² John, viii. 55; xvii. 25.

³ Col. i. 10. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

on nature in the darkness of night : they may trace out unattractive forms, but what will they know of its living beauty ? Or as one who, instead of meeting his best and dearest friend, should speak only to the vacant air, returning weary from the mockery, instead of refreshed and strengthened from living communion. If your knowledge of God brings with it no living strength and joy, do not be discouraged, but rather rejoice, that there is that which may yet be yours, beyond all you had thought or understood, and be content no longer with the shadow, but seek the substance until you find it. When you have learned the true knowledge of God by communion with Him in His Word, and in prayer, then you may learn to look for and to find Him everywhere. Your eye, enlightened by the true knowledge of Him, and strengthened by His Light, will become so quick in discerning, so strong to penetrate, that nothing will be able to hide Him from you. You will meet Him in every duty, behold Him in every place, walk with Him in every step. And all this will be ever deepening and enlarging your knowledge of Him ; filling your heart ever more and more with the peace, and assurance, and joy, that the true and increasing knowledge of God in Christ, must ever bring,¹ until the day when that which is in part shall be done away, for that which is perfect shall then be come. When, having put on the Lord

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 17, 18.

Jesus here, you shall wake up in His likeness for ever, and know even as you are known.¹

In Jesus we find perfect TRUTH. The more you know of the Word of God, the more will you learn of His estimate of truth. God is a God of truth.² Satan is the father of lies:³ and no lie is of the Truth.⁴ If we have put on Christ Jesus, truth must be dear to us. It must be our daily effort to put away all untruth, whether in word or act, whether expressed or implied. The idea of truth is so highly esteemed among men, that its reality is often cast away, in order that its semblance before the world may be retained. Many an untruth might be recalled, but courage is wanted to meet the shame of confessing the transgression of a law which man highly esteems. The base counterfeit is retained, when an effort might have restored the priceless jewel. Truth in its reality, is sacrificed to its semblance. Of the treachery and deceit which are practised in the world, we need not speak.—Truth has fallen in the streets; and equity cannot enter.⁵—All are awaiting His judgment, before Whom every secret thing is written out in Light.⁶ But among the young, how often is truth sacrificed to avoid censure, or to please another by flattery; facts are twisted into untruths by exaggeration or misrepresentation, to win a smile—to entertain at

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. ² Deut. xxxii. 4. ³ John, viii. 44.

⁴ 1 John, ii. 21. ⁵ Isa. lix. 14, 15. ⁶ Luke, xii. 3. Heb. iv. 13.

the awful cost of Truth, or through the carelessness that keeps no guard over that which is the object of Jehovah's jealous care. Truth is cast away unvalued, unsorrowed for, cast away for the merest trifle, the rejecter of it little dreaming of the estimate he must one day awake to entertain, when he stands before the judgment-seat of the Truth, by his words to be justified, or by his words to be condemned.¹ It is not man's estimate which can constitute truth. Learn to look upon, and know it by its own light; not by the false lights, which the deceitful heart of man has cast upon it. You may often have to take a backward step, to recall the words you have spoken, but if it be a step to recover truth, hesitate not to take it. Your words may seem to you harmless in their bearing, but if truth is compromised by them, they are evil, and you by them are leaving a record against yourself, as the child of Truth. You can never walk firmly, unless you walk with that strict integrity which refuses to allow in yourself the indulgence of a single untruth. You can never walk with God, unless you are resolved, at any cost, to walk in truth.

FAITH is trust in the truth of God. Trust in His Heavenly Father was perfect in the Lord Jesus: and the more that our true knowledge of God increases, the more will our faith be strengthened to trust in Him. Two things are necessary to enable

¹ Matt. xii. 37.

faith to lay assured hold of all Heavenly Blessings, in and by Christ Jesus—A knowledge of that which God has promised; and of that which He requires. This is all with which faith is concerned. The natural mind will be engaged looking upon difficulties, probabilities, usual results, expecting and believing according to their evidence. But faith's aim is to look over all these. It would dishonour God by no earthly calculations. It looks direct to Him. Its inquiry is, What is the promise of my God, and what are His commands? Then embracing and believing the one, while it humbly and earnestly seeks to obey the other, it looks for nothing short of the fulness of every Blessing: not from any thought of worthiness, faith knows that it has all in *another*, and witnesses this by seeking all in Jesus; but it expects the fulfilment of every promise, to those who seek them in the path of obedience: because the God of Truth has declared this to be His blessed Will.¹ We may use the disciple's prayer, "Lord, increase our faith."²

Faith cannot be where OBEDIENCE is not. Faith not only leads to obedience—faith *involves* obedience.³ The absence of obedience proves the failure of faith. In Jesus, we behold obedience to God, as perfect as His trust in God. He could say of His Heavenly Father, "I do always those things that

¹ Mark, xi. 22-26.

² Luke, xvii. 5.

³ Jam. ii. 26.

please Him.”¹ As the Son of Man, He passed through the same school of Heavenly discipline, by which every heir of God through Him is trained and sanctified. It is said of Him, “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.”² The same result will no less surely follow with us, if we daily endeavour to learn the same Heavenly lesson of obedience to the Will of God. Then every disappointment or annoyance, every pricking brier and grieving thorn,³ which the day may call us to meet and endure, will become an opportunity for subduing our own wills to the Will of God. Having been trained in this Heavenly discipline, when severer trial comes, we shall find the peace of a spirit that has learned the obedience of *trust* and *love*; instead of having to endure the bitterness of a resisting, but helpless will. Every hour of your life, you are acting in obedience or disobedience to the Will of God. His will is leaving its ineffaceable mark upon your every thought, and word, and act. If contrary to His Will, nothing can change it. It may indeed be blotted out by the blood of Jesus; but the place it fills will then bear witness to His love for you, *and your want of love for Him*. Each separate instance may seem to you a trifle; but the Heavenly Principle is weakened or strengthened by each. It is the apparent trifles of life which steal from many all Heavenly consis-

¹ John, viii. 29.² Heb. v. 8.³ Ezek. xxviii. 24.

tency. Think not the least point unimportant, for it equally involves the highest principle, and will most surely weaken or strengthen you for the greatest demands, according as you meet it with obedience or disobedience. The great enemy of our happiness is ever on the watch to weaken our obedience, by drawing away its seemingly smallest portions, by means of which it never becomes firm and strong against him. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.¹ But he that takes no heed to moments of time, to thoughts, and words, as well as actions, must find in the end, that all his life has shrunk to but little space, bearing but thinly scattered fruit to witness the sincerity of his faith and love.

The inseparable connexion between faith and obedience, may be evident to us; but we may not be able with equal clearness to trace the connexion, in the practical carrying out of truth and LOVE, in our daily life. Yet Jesus is no less Love² than He is Truth.³ If we put on Christ we must reflect His love no less than His truth. If the Law of truth,⁴ and the Law of kindness,⁵ are to be alike written on our lips, then they must be both written on our hearts. If our feeling be a feeling of kindness, the expression of it will be truth. There is no human being, no fellow-sinner in this evil world,

¹ Luke, xvi. 10.² 1 John, iv. 16.³ John, xiv. 6.⁴ Mal. ii. 6.⁵ Prov. xxxi. 26.

who has not a claim upon our kindness. Our least transgression is far more hateful in the eye of God, than the vilest iniquity can be in our sight: and yet His kindness ceases not towards us; and if we have put on Christ Jesus, we shall have received of His Spirit. If Sin be not to extinguish the feeling of our hearts towards the sinner, then surely nothing less ought to be able to do so. If points of character, unattractive to us, can extinguish all the kindness of our hearts towards a fellow-creature, how unlike are we to Him, Whose image we aspire to bear! Those in whom most kindness dwells, can best be true and firm. One heavenly grace is not destroyed by another; they exist in harmony, each adding to the other's fulness and strength. Do not fear to seek for the deepening of earthly affection into the never-failing spring of *Heavenly love*. Do not think, that because it is broader, therefore all individuality will be merged and lost in it. Heavenly love guides earthly affection on to an Eternity, for which it purifies and hallows it: the while it also brings within its circle all whom the natural sympathies would not reach.

Whether, therefore, we seek for Justification or Sanctification, we must, by the Holy Spirit's aid, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And while we shall ever find occasion to say with the chief Apostle, "Brethren, I count not myself to have appre-

hended:" may we also, with equal truth, be ever able to add, "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."¹

¹ Philip. iii. 13, 14.

CHAPTER VII.

“AND HE TOOK BREAD, AND GAVE THANKS, AND BRAKE IT, AND GAVE UNTO THEM, SAYING, THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU: THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. LIKEWISE ALSO THE CUP AFTER SUPPER, SAYING, THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD, WHICH IS SHED FOR YOU.”—Luke, xxii. 19, 20.

It is in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper that the Son of God is most evidently set before us as crucified.¹ It was an institution of the Lord's own appointment, the night before He suffered. It is doubly bound upon His people's hearts, by His example as well as His command. You may be already a partaker of this sacred feast; and, if life on earth be granted you, it may be yours to partake of it through many years. You will always find its outward aspect the same—the same Invitation; the same Assurance; the same Emblems; the same Command. Yet it will not be the same to you. Year by year, if your knowledge of Christ increases, and your love to Him deepens, this sacred ordinance, in which you receive Him into your heart by faith,

¹ Gal. iii. 1.

will bring you *more* of all Heavenly Blessings. The more intimate that your acquaintance becomes with Christ, in His Word, and in His Work, the more clearly and fully will you be enabled to behold Him when you meet Him at His table; and beholding, to receive His likeness more fully impressed upon you.

If Jesus is not yours in His death, He can never be yours in His Life. It is in His death you are called upon to receive Him, that He may be yours also in His resurrection and eternal Life. All the efficacy of this sacred service depends upon your receiving Christ in it. You observe how directly the Lord leads us to this point—"This is *My Body*. This is *My Blood*. Do this in remembrance of *Me*." And then He equally directs us to the necessity of our personal belief, and personal reception of Him—"My body, which is given for *you*. My blood, which is shed for *you*." Of the partaking of the bread He said, "*Do this* in remembrance of *Me*:" and with the cup, St. Matthew tells us that His injunction was, "*Drink ye all* of it." Every Heavenly Blessing here, and the fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, can be yours only by the purchase of the death of Christ. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ."¹ Of all who in faith partake of this Heavenly feast, it may be that no

¹ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

two individuals receive the same supply. There is in Christ an infinite fulness of all Blessing; those who hunger and thirst most for Him, will receive most from Him. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."¹ And whatever the need may be, the sense of which presses most upon the heart, all its supply lies in Jesus. Whatever the need may be, He is the satisfying portion: hallowing the cup of joy, and causing it to overflow; sanctifying and sweetening the bitterest cup of sorrow; and the dispenser of every Heavenly Blessing.

If the Lord Jesus has led you out of Darkness into Light, then you have learned to know something of the evil of Sin, something of the plague of your own heart,² and that which you most desire to find in Christ is the pardon of all your sin, and deliverance from its power. It is this assurance which this sacred feast most evidently sets before you. When you look to the Lord Jesus in this ordinance of His own appointment, he then gives Himself to you in it, first in the full salvation of His death, and then in all the blessings of His endless Life. That broken bread is His appointed token, that so surely as you receive it in obedience to His command, looking by faith to Him, He gives to you His sacred body, broken on the Cross, as an atonement for all your sin. When you

¹ Ps. cvii. 9.

² 1 Kings, viii. 38.

drink of the cup, it is His appointed token, that He gives to your faith the blood that cleanseth from all sin. All those who find their Life in His death, will find their happiness in His Life. Are you full of the vigour of youth, the freshness of life's unclouded morning? Having found in Jesus the forgiveness of Sin, you may find in Him the source, and centre, and the immortality of Life, the bloom and freshness of all joy. All that is of earth alone, must one day fade and die; the worm of Death is at its root, because the taint of Sin is in it. But in Jesus is no Sin.¹ "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."² Oh, seek then to be made one with Christ, that He may evermore dwell in you, and you in Him, for He is able to take away all your Sin.³ Your life, though but of yesterday, if bound up with His, will never end: and even the fruit that it bears, perishable as it may appear, will last for ever. Will you not then welcome this sacred feast, by which the Lord invites you to renew and strengthen your union with Himself? Is it your desire to devote your leisure to the good of others; to instruct the ignorant, that they, too, may know the joyful sound, and walk in the Light of the Lord?⁴ It is Jesus alone, whose commission it is to open the blind eyes, to

¹ 1 John, iii. 5.² Ps. xlv. 7.³ 1 John, i. 7.⁴ Ps. lxxxix. 15.

bring forth the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the prison-house.¹ It is He alone who knows the heart of childhood and old age; who by His Spirit and His Blessing can enable you to feed His lambs,² and to speak a word in season to them that are weary.³ He has said, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."⁴ Whatever desire you may have to live for the happiness of others, it is only by union with Christ that you can hope effectually to promote their eternal good. Do you wish to sympathise with those who are in sorrow—to comfort, strengthen, bless! It is only by union with Jesus, the Man of sorrows,⁵ the Healer of the broken-hearted,⁶ that you can insure the accomplishment of your desire. If he is one with you, your youth and inexperience need be no hindrance in your way. He can teach you to understand the trials of the afflicted, and truly to sympathise with them. He can send you as His messenger, laden with His own Truth, and Love, and Blessing. He can so enrich you with His own Spirit, as to make you on earth a comforter—a child of consolation.⁷ "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."⁸ It may be that you have yourself known sorrow, and earth may look

¹ Isa. xlii. 7. ² John, xxi. 15. ³ Isa. l. 4. ⁴ John, xv. 7.

⁵ Isa. liii. 3. ⁶ Isa. lxi. 1. ⁷ Acts, iv. 36. ⁸ John, xv. 5.

a darkened place to you. But there is no Darkness on earth that the Light of Life cannot penetrate ; no grief that Heavenly Love cannot soothe. Your union with earth, while you are in it, must often bring sorrow ; but union with Jesus will bring peace on earth, and the fulness of joy in Heaven. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer : I have overcome the world."¹ "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."²

The outward emblems of bread and wine, which the Lord Jesus has appointed to be received, in remembrance of His death, furnish a test of your obedience to His command, and of your desire for the Heavenly gifts—manifested by your seeking them through the appointed means. By your observance of this Institution of the Lord's, you furnish an outward witness to the world of your faith in God. It is a declaration that the death of the Lord Jesus is the ground of your trust before God.³ A declaration that His flesh is meat indeed,⁴ and His blood drink indeed. In keeping Thy commandments there is great reward!⁵ To yourself this sacred ordinance may ever furnish some fresh manifestation of the Lord as your God. He has promised to manifest Himself to those who have His commandments and

¹ John, xvi. 33.² Ps. xvi. 11.³ 1 Cor. xi. 23-26.⁴ John, vi. 55.⁵ Ps. xix. 11.

keep them.¹ And when the world sees Him not, He can, and does, show Himself to those who look for Him²—giving them a blessed earnest of what it shall be to be for ever with Him.³ It was when He gave them the broken bread at Emmaus, that the eyes of the disciples were first opened to behold their risen Lord.⁴ He had been near them before, as they walked and were sad, teaching them by His word, and blessing them by His presence; but they knew not that it was Jesus, until He made Himself known unto them in that very act which before He suffered He had appointed as a lasting commemoration of His death.

The Lord's appointment, that in this sacred service you should receive the outward emblems of bread and wine, is also a pledge and assurance to you, that not your spirit only, but your dying body is redeemed by Him. He includes both in this act of remembrance—an assurance that those bodies which by His own appointment are now fed with the emblems of His most blessed body and blood, are included in the work of His finished redemption, and shall one day wake up in His likeness. The ordinance is one of Divine appointment, and we can have no *higher* authority for rejecting that which *God* has enjoined. In this, as in all other things, the Heavenly way, on earth, is narrow—to seek the

¹ John, xiv. 21.

² John, xiv. 19.

³ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

⁴ Luke, xxiv.

promised blessing in the use of the appointed means, neither losing sight of the one nor neglecting the other. We see how many are tempted to decline both to the right hand and to the left : some expecting the blessing without the diligent use of all the appointed means ; and others regarding the means, not as the channels, but as the grace itself ; not as the way in which the blessing is to be sought, because God has so appointed, but as the treasury in which the blessing is contained. The word which He hath spoken, the same shall judge us at the last day.¹ May He grant unto you so clear a Light in the knowledge of His Will, that you may be enabled to walk safely and surely in the narrow way—in the humble and diligent use of all the means He has graciously appointed, ever looking up to Him in all, as the author and the sovereign dispenser of every good and perfect gift. Then will David's brief but comprehensive prayer be indeed fulfilled to you—Christ will *save* you ; He will *bless* you ; He will *feed* you also ; and then *lift you up for ever* !²

When man sinned, Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, were set to keep the Tree of Life.³ But the Tree of Life, though inaccessible in Eden by reason of man's sin, is raised on Calvary. It bears another form to meet man's altered circumstances : healing, as well as Life, is in it now ; healing for the wounded, Life for the dead.

¹ John, xii. 48.² Ps. xxviii. 9.³ Gen. iii. 24.

Patriarchs, Prophets, and Saints of old, gathered its healing leaves and life-giving fruit. They sat down under its shadow with great delight, and its fruit was sweet to their taste.¹ But when it grew up in the sight of all men, as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground,² then sickness, and sorrow, and death were laid beneath it, and they lived anew.³ There is no Cherubim or flaming sword to keep the Cross on Calvary. You may come to Him who hung thereon, and freely gather the fruit of Immortality. You may put forth the hand of faith, and eat and live for ever. "Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the Light, lest Darkness come upon you."⁴ The Tree of Life will not be always found on Calvary. St. John beheld it, where it will abide for ever—on either side the River which makes glad the city of God in Heaven.⁵ There it bears twelve manner of fruits; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Every one who finds Life by it here, will find it there to be the cure of all sorrow of heart; the healing of every wound, the joy of every grief. May we be found walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; for to those alone who do His commandments is the blessing promised, of a right to the Tree of Life, and entrance through the Gates into the City.⁶

¹ Song of Sol. ii. 3.² Isa. liii. 2.³ Matt. viii. 17.⁴ John, xii. 35. ⁵ Rev. xxii. 1, 2. Ps. xlv. 14. ⁶ Rev. xxii. 14.

CHAPTER VIII.

“IN THAT HE DIED, HE DIED UNTO SIN ONCE: BUT IN THAT HE LIVETH, HE LIVETH UNTO GOD. LIKEWISE RECKON YE YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.”—Rom. vi. 10, 11.

WHEN death has loosed the bands of a slave, his former master has no more authority over him. He may issue his commands, his threats, or his promises, but all alike fall unregarded. The once helpless captive is freed by death; he is gone where the servant is free from his master;¹ loosed for ever from the will which till then ruled over him with despotic sway. If you are a partaker in the death of Christ, then you are dead to *Sin*. It may still *assert* its power, it may try commands, promises, threatenings; but it is yours to be as though you heard them not. The death of Jesus sets you free—if you are one with Him, Sin shall not have dominion over you.² The constant remembrance of this truth must abide with you, if you would live as one indeed dead unto Sin, but alive unto God

¹ Job, iii. 19.

² Rom. vi. 14.

through Jesus Christ. The slave, whom death has freed, has no power to return to his former master: but you are freed from Sin, not by your own death, but by another's death for you. It is the Death of the Lord Jesus which has broken the yoke of Sin, and set the lawful Captive free.¹ You are still within hearing of its call: it lies within your power to bind its yoke of slavery again upon your spirit.² Therefore the apostle's injunction is, "*Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto Sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,*"—Live, as one dead to Sin: live as the servant, the child of God.³

These are the two points which an Eternity stretching before you presses upon your immediate attention—To die unto Sin: to live unto God. Every successive moment presents the requirement, and the opportunity for its fulfilment. Sin often comes to its former captives, and they say of it, "This is not Sin." It comes with some pleasing bait, some tempting promise, and they do not recognise it; they do its bidding, suffering themselves to be bound with its chains; and then, when they would turn to their Heavenly Redeemer, they cannot. Sin has taken such hold upon them that they cannot look up. It has led them into darkness which they cannot penetrate; gladly would they reach their Saviour's feet, but the fetters of Sin are upon them, and they cannot; all they can do is to call upon

¹ Isa. xlix. 24, 25.² Gal. v. 7.³ Rom. vi. 22.

Him who has delivered them before, and entreat that He will deliver them yet again.¹ The only means by which you can detect Sin in its every form, is by increasing in the knowledge of God. One false step in the dark will be no guard against your falling into fresh dangers, if you walk on still in the same darkness. That which you want is *light*, then you will see your way, and distinguish every object that presents itself before you. If you would more readily detect the approach, and the workings of Sin, you must walk more fully in the Light of the Lord. It is not till the Holy Spirit comes that the sinner's heart is truly convinced of Sin, because not till then does the Light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ shine into it.² If you would be enabled to discover, and to resist Sin, you must seek an intimate acquaintance with God. You must seek it in the study of His written word; in communion with Him by prayer; in the observation of all He has done and is doing for you, and for others. You must walk with Him; live with Him; think of Him; look to Him. His promise is, "I will guide thee with Mine eye."³ He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."⁴ He has said, "*Watch and pray* that ye enter not into temptation."⁵ If the Word of God be not your study; if you be not continually

¹ Ps. xxiii. 3. ² John, xvi. 8. 2 Cor. iv. 16. ³ Ps. xxxii. 8.

⁴ John, x. 27.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 41.

watching ; if you be not earnest in prayer ; you will one day discover that God has often spoken to you, and you have not heard ; called, and you have not answered ; commanded, and you have not obeyed ; promised, and you have not obtained, because you have not sought for the fulfilment of His promises.

If it be your desire to prove your adoption as a child of God, by a death unto Sin, and a life unto Righteousness, then let nothing discourage you. If you persevere in the effort of looking unto Jesus, and walking by the Light of His Word, Sin's strongest chains will melt away ; they cannot abide the Light of His Love, it melts their strength like ice beneath the summer's sun. And whenever, at any moment, you find you have departed from the Lord, delay not to return. The Love you have forsaken, waits for you unchanged—"I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."¹ Every step you take away from God, is only bringing more deadness and darkness into your soul. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord : say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him."² If you are conscious of having departed from the Lord in the past moment, you may turn again to Him in this. He

¹ Mal. iii. 6.

² Hos. xiv. 1, 2, 4.

upbraideth not!¹ He who has taught us to forgive our Brother until seventy times seven,² has no measure for the pardon He bestows upon His repentant children in their return to Him.³

Jesus "died to Sin." By His death He put away, from all who believe in Him, the guilt of every sin. And if you are dead to Sin, you must not wilfully submit yourself to it in anything. The temptation to a foolish thought is from Sin;⁴ the temptation to an idle word is from Sin;⁵ the temptation to any transgression of the law of truth or love is from Sin; the temptation to the least unbelief or disobedience is from Sin⁶—"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no Light in them."⁷ David says, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."⁸ "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."⁹ This is the freedom, and the evidence, of your Heavenly adoption—that you die unto Sin, and live unto God. "In that He died, He died unto Sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." The same light which teaches us what to refuse, will teach us also what to choose. "There is a way

¹ Jam. i. 5.² Matt. xviii. 21, 22.³ Luke, xv.⁴ Prov. xxiv. 9.⁵ Matt. xii. 36.⁶ Jam. ii. 10.⁷ Isa. viii. 20.⁸ Ps. cxix. 11.⁹ Ps. cxix. 104.

which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of Death.”¹ The only means by which we can live to God, is by a growing acquaintance with Him, an increasing knowledge, and a steadfast endeavour to walk according to His will.—“Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”² When it is your desire and endeavour to do the Will of your Father in Heaven—whatsoever you do in word or in deed, to do all to the glory of God—then indeed you are living as one dead unto Sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In that He died, He died unto Sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. It is not the Cross alone which we behold on Calvary; the open grave is there also. The Believer, while on earth, takes his stand between the two—the Cross, which tells of Death and Atonement; the open grave, which bears witness to Life and Justification: he takes his stand between the two; looking up to Him who passed through the grave and gate of death for His people, and is now seated at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for him.³ He who paid the sinner’s debt, paid it with an infinite ransom, above all that Justice had demanded. He could not therefore be detained in the prison-house of the grave. He stood as man’s surety, Sin and Death received from Him an unlooked-for price;

¹ Prov. xiv. 12. ² Phil. iii. 16. ³ Heb. vii. 25. Rom. viii. 34.

the prey was taken from the mighty, man's debt was cancelled for ever, and both the sinner, and his Surety, were free. See with what triumphant Majesty He rises! He rises as *the Son of Man*, and Heaven itself comes down to open the door of His prison-house, in token that, in Jesus, man is not only justified, but accepted, and glorified.¹ If we are not one with Christ Jesus, the grave must be to us the awful entrance to a deeper, darker dungeon. But if Christ be ours, the grave has lost its victory over us; it stands open towards the face of Heaven, and becomes but as a passage-room from which the child of God will pass arrayed for Immortality. Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again."² Then Martha's thoughts turned to the last day. But the Lord brought them back to Himself—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." If you are one with the Lord Jesus, the Life of Immortality has already quickened your spirit; and if you abide in Jesus, you shall never taste of death.³ You may trace the evidence of this Immortality, in your altered aims in life; your aim no longer earthly but Heavenly; no longer for time alone, but for Eternity. Even in the same duties and pursuits which occupied you before, you now hold communion

¹ Matt. xxviii. 1-10.

² John, xi. 23-26.

³ John, viii. 51, 52.

with Him who is immortal and invisible. You live unto God. Well might *He* call the death of the body *sleep*, Who has, for every child of His, abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light.¹

When at any time a doubt assails the mind of the believer in Jesus, whether his aggravated sins can be pardoned, his backslidings forgiven, he has but to look upon the Cross of Jesus, and then upon His open grave, there to read the assurance, which Sin, and Death, and Hell, can never efface, that his warfare is accomplished, his iniquity pardoned, and double mercy waiting to cover all his sins.² We see how quickly this was manifested in the case of the disciples. They had forsaken Christ and fled; but no sooner is He risen from the dead than He sends a message to them: "Go ye to my *Brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto *My Father*, and *your Father*; to *my God*, and *your God*."³ No remembrance is made of sin, for "He had cast all their sins into the depth of the sea."⁴ Their iniquity was forgiven—their Sin was no more remembered.⁵ The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found."⁶ Peter's sin was double, but double mercy hastens to meet his bitter grief—"He was seen of *Peter*; then of the twelve."—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to *Simon*." The

¹ 2 Tim. i. 10.

² Isa. xl. 1, 2.

³ John, xx. 17.

⁴ Mic. vii. 19.

⁵ Jer. xxxi. 34.

⁶ Jer. L. 20.

Angel, who kept watch within the tomb, was thinking upon *Peter*, and charged with a message to him by name. And when the Lord deigned to sit at table again with His disciples, as He had been wont to do, in familiar intercourse, the only token that He gave of the wounds inflicted by that thrice-repeated denial, was by asking from Peter's lips a thrice-repeated assurance of love. He, who knew the heart, would leave to Peter, and to every mourning sinner after him, the remembrance that he had been suffered to write the assurance of his love, *over each denial*, with the certainty that He who asked it knew its truth. And then He gave to Peter the strongest proof that He could not only forgive but trust him, for He committed to him the feeding of those sheep and lambs for whom He had laid down His life.¹ "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us!"²

It may be that you have never looked upon death. But you have stood within the Churchyard, among the graves of those whom the interests and the love of earth once encircled as they now encircle you. How sad for us to look upon the sod that covers them, if we know not the open grave of the Lord Jesus! If our faith is familiar with Calvary, then we may look with solemn joy upon the graves of the departed. It is true we cannot tell which are the dead who sleep in Jesus; except it be the grave of

¹ John, xxi. 15-19.

² Ps. ciii. 12.

a span long, or the resting-place of some whose blessed memory may be known to us. But we know that if the tares are there, the wheat¹ is there also; and we may think of the Day, when the voice of Him who was laid in the rich man's tomb shall awake the dead.²

The narrow way that leadeth unto Life, has on one side of it a sight of the Cross; and on the other, the open grave of the Lord Jesus. Ever as you feel the guilt of Sin, either in yourself or others—you may look upon the Cross, and find there its antidote, its atonement; and when you see the suffering and the sorrow that abound on earth, and when you see life fading into death, whatsoever sadness you behold—you may look upon the open grave of Jesus, and to the open Heaven above it. With such an object on either side, must not the way to Heaven be a way of pleasantness, a path of peace? The more you know of the Lord Jesus in His Death, and in the power of His Resurrection, the more will you increase your joy in the Lord; and the more will you be blessed of God, and your life on earth prove a blessing. And if in *life* you have looked upon the Cross, and the open grave of the Lord Jesus, what can alarm you in *death*? Close beside the Cross and open grave of Jesus, you can fear no evil. It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again,

¹ Matt. xiii. 24-30.

² John, v. 28, 29.

who is even at the right hand of God:¹ and he has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."² And so, if found in Jesus, you shall be ever with the Lord³—in that Land of perfect *Knowledge*, which the Glory of God doth lighten, and the Lamb is the Light thereof: that Land, whose atmosphere is *Truth* and *Love*; and where *Obedience* dwells in every heart, where all do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word; the Land where every sinner, who on earth lifted the eye of *faith* to Jesus Christ, is gathered to His Father's presence; where every one reflects the perfect *image* of the Lord they love; where they are *one with Him*—a union perfected for ever; the Land which Sin and Death can never enter, which none can see, who are not born of God; a Land where the Lord has placed the Crown of Life on every head, and everlasting joy; while sorrow and sighing are fled away.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last

¹ Rom. viii. 34.² John, xiv. 19.³ 2 Thess. iv. 17.

time.”¹ “Wherefore, be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”² “And now, *abide in Him*, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”³

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3-5.

² Rom. xii. 2.

³ 1 John, ii. 28.

THE END.

LONDON :

STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN (LATE G. BARCLAY), PRINTERS,
28 Castle Street, Leicester Square.

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